

THE BOOK
OF
THE LABOUR PARTY

ITS HISTORY, GROWTH
POLICY, AND LEADERS

EDITED BY
HERBERT TRACEY

IN THREE VOLUMES. ILLUSTRATED



VOLUME I

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TO THE
LABOUR RANK AND FILE
WHOSE LOYALTY, DEVOTION, AND SELF-SACRIFICE
BUILT UP THE LABOUR MOVEMENT
AND GAVE THEIR LEADERS
THE OPPORTUNITY OF SERVICE
THIS BOOK
IS
DEDICATED

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE history of the Labour Movement, as the story of the workers' achievement in establishing their political and industrial organisation for the pursuit of a policy they have defined for themselves, has yet to be told in a complete and comprehensive narrative. Trade Unionism has found its historians in Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb; Mr. and Mrs. Hammond have described in three valuable volumes the condition of the English working-classes; and Mr. Max Beer has written an adequate history of British Socialism. Important contributions to the literature of the working-class movement, describing its structure and its problems, its vicissitudes and its triumphs, have been made by other writers; and there is a growing library of biographical and autobiographical literature in which the ultimate historian will find the material to illustrate the human and personal aspects of working-class history. But there does not exist at the present time, within the compass of a single work, a complete historical summary, review, and description of the Labour Movement and its Makers, Aims, and Policy. The want of such a work has been increasingly felt.

In the three volumes of this work, planned and executed as a co-operative undertaking, an attempt has been made to supply this want. It owes its origin to a suggestion of the Publishers, and the Labour Movement is not officially responsible for its appearance: the writers who have dealt with questions of policy and principle have written under their own names; and their names are a guarantee that every aspect of policy presented has been treated with expert knowledge and authority. Their aim has been to state the Labour view of social, industrial, financial, and political problems and solutions as they understand the Labour view; and an effort has been made to deal with fundamental questions of principle, rather than with matters of immediate controversy. These volumes are intended to reveal the background of the Labour Movement, both historically and intellectually, in order that those who read them may understand and appreciate more fully the Labour attitude towards current controversies. More than a mere exposition of the official Labour programme is

offered in these volumes, for each writer has endeavoured to analyse the various problems which challenge the attention of all the political parties, and to explain how Labour proposes to deal with them as issues of principle between it and the other parties.

The historical part of this work has been written by several hands, and a full list of those who have contributed to the unsigned portion of Volume I is printed on another page. This method of writing Labour history has its disadvantages ; a certain amount of repetition and overlapping had to be eliminated, but the historical sketch has been written as a whole by a group of Labour people who know a good deal more about the development of the Labour Movement than can be found in any book, and who have known personally, or at least intermediately, most of the men and women who have made the Movement what it has become within the last two generations. By the co-operative plan of writing, some aspects of Labour history have been brought into view which a single writer, however competent and well-informed, would not, perhaps, have perceived, or may not have felt to be important. The writers have worked to a general plan for which the Editor alone was responsible, and he alone is to be blamed for defects and deficiencies in the narrative as well as for repetition and redundancy in detail.

Personality has counted for so much in the development of the Labour Movement, that thrice the space could have been devoted to biography without doing justice to the men and women who have made the Movement. The leaders who have been included in the biographical section have been selected for their representative character, as a means of showing the variety of talents and quality of service the Labour Movement has commanded. The list is not exhaustive, but has indeed been severely restricted. Some of the Movement's most picturesque, able, and influential personalities could not be included for want of space. Both in the Labour Party and in the Trade Unions there are scores of men and women whose personal history is as romantic and whose services to the organised workers are as great as any dealt with in these volumes. Their work and their reputation are in the keeping of the organised Movement they have helped to create.

HERBERT TRACEY.

HAMPTON WICK,
September 1925.

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THE
BOOK OF THE LABOUR PARTY
ITS HISTORY, GROWTH, POLICY, AND LEADERS

FOREWORD

BY THE RT. HON. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.

I COMMEND these volumes for the purpose of permanent and helpful reference on all outstanding points of Labour Party history and fact.

The Labour Party should not any longer be left without its basis and background of trustworthy narrative. Especially so when the accurate and reliable volumes which tell the story of its origin and growth can be made an effective advocate further to expound and defend the new force in the political and social development of our country.

Many as are the references already existing, in the form of pamphlets, books, records of conferences and reports of organised bodies such as Trade Unions, there is yet a need for something more permanent, continuous, and co-ordinated as a register of British working-class history.

There is, of course, nothing phenomenal in the birth and growth of a new party. Every age provides itself with its own special medium of expression for Parliamentary or political advance. What is unprecedented and notable is the progress of a new party burdened with the name of "Labour," and struggling to make headway against the resistance or indifference of the particular class which the new party desired especially to assist.

Let there be no underestimating the effect of names. Names and labels, in the present state of political education, mean much, and the impressions subconsciously resulting from names can be carefully cultivated, modified, and perverted by the powerful instrumentality of the Press. The

Press says for a period of years "All Socialists are villains, atheists, perverters of public morals," and many under the influence of reiteration believe these things. The Press then goes a step farther, and when it is convenient, calls out: "The Labour Party is composed of Socialists!" The popular deduction then unconsciously drawn is an evidence of the impotence of names. Counter education will in time live that down.

These pages attempt to do justice to the more prominent figures and personalities on whose early and devoted service the fate of the party largely depended. Nearly all the records, however, in book or pamphlet, dealing with the history of Labour are limited to the names of well-known men, who worked either from London or, say, Glasgow as a centre.

In between these two geographical extremes, scores of unnamed but serviceable and loyal pioneers worked obscurely in covering the territory of great counties like Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Durham, where in the beginnings of the party the biggest response to the new appeal was found.

These men and women had not merely changed their politics, or begun to interest themselves in Parliamentary affairs. They had, so to speak, adopted a religion, for their politics were held as a faith, and the zeal of the missionary stimulated the activities which with unremitting toil the propagandist work of the Labour Party was carried on.

They were not content with meetings. Discussion and study classes, rambling clubs, the issue of pamphlets, laborious efforts to maintain local papers, the organisation of choirs and bands, to attract and entertain crowds at public meetings, support to travelling lecture-vans to invade the rural parts of Britain, became the outward signs of an inward enthusiasm which first amused and later startled the leaders of other political bodies.

To these pioneers the most magnetic and revered name was that of Keir Hardie. He symbolised the determined warrior, and though gentle and courteous in manner, he was inflexible and resolute in the pursuance of objects which gathered strength as he toiled for them.

It was my privilege, together with a few others, to act with Keir Hardie thirty-three years ago in calling the first meeting held to establish the Independent Labour Party on a National footing. Some have alleged that the British Labour Party was inspired by Socialists and political economists of foreign

origin. My belief is that though the valuable teachings of these men found their proper place, the British Labour Movement would have forged ahead on the strength of British service and ideas if political economists in other lands had never been born.

A history, to be a full and genuine record, must be more than a record of personal effort ; it must cover the emergence, growth, and fluctuation of policies and views on transitory questions. This history amply covers such questions, and makes clear the manner in which the Labour Movement of the present day has come to being out of many separate—and perhaps desperate—beginnings.

Furthermore, it makes clear the relationship (not by any means clear to many people whose sympathies are "Labour," but who are not active political workers) between the various sub-structures of which the total Labour Movement is composed. The clearer these things are made the better.

A stranger to English politics has been heard to say : " I can recognise your Tory Party ; I know where it begins and where it leaves off ; the same is true of your Liberal Party, though *it* seems to spend most of its time in leaving off ; but your Labour Party is complicated. How does it work ? "

This history will tell anybody how it works, and to such good purpose that, if extensive use is made of it, many of the opportunities of misrepresentation and distorted statement which our opponents have used will be destroyed.

The party has struggled against amazing prejudice and misunderstandings, resting upon the foolish notion that it was not an instrument for securing national improvement, but a mere class weapon employed as a destructive and not a constructive force.

The Labour Party inevitably depended in its early years upon the more enterprising and enlightened Trade Unions for numerical and financial backing, and upon the Independent Labour Party for vigorous and original political endeavour in the sphere of educational work.

The party, of course, was blamed for such industrial lapses or adventures as occurred from time to time, when through strikes or stoppages bodies of workmen sought advances in wages or improvements in their position. The party as a political organisation neither caused nor desired these stoppages, but as they afforded material for platform censure

FOREWORD

and newspaper condemnation the Labour Party was wrongly held accountable for anything done by an Industrial Body.

In the early years of the party two events—one quite external, and the other domestic—aroused the Trade Unions to a pitch which induced many of them definitely to adopt the ~~independent~~ political faith with an earnestness not previously displayed.

The enlistment of Chinese Labour in South Africa, following a war which organised workers considered to be as lamentable as it was long, and a decision in an English Court of Law, known as the Osborne Judgment, which had the effect of imposing new fetters upon Trade Unions in relation to their political activities, gave to the Labour Party a greater degree of help than any other two events which have occurred in its history.

The contrast between the earlier days of the party and nowadays, reveals some change in the character and dimensions of the questions which the party has taken in hand. At one time it appeared that if some half-dozen minor subjects could be taken up and settled, the whole task of the party would be nearly complete.

This, in its own fashion, was natural enough, because though a general discontent brought the party into existence, that discontent centred about specific grievances.

These were questions like compensation for injured workmen; an eight-hour day; relief during unemployment; the establishment of a minimum wage; pensions for the aged poor; and reform of the Poor Law.

As the party grew in numbers with certainty of mind and fighting resources, its conceptions of policy steadily widened and became more impersonal and less purely specific and local. The various odds-and-ends of political ambitions were steadily bound together by the common spirit animating them, and steadily they were co-ordinated.

There was, of course, in early years, much sincere though general talk about ideals and nationalisation of public services, but the more practical and definite legislative proposals supplied the main material for the propaganda work of the party.

Compare those proposals with the outline of objects and demands expressed in recent Manifestoes, Congress Resolutions, and the more ambitious proposals described by some of the articles in the second volume of this work.

It is beyond question that the influence of the party on the political education of the people has been considerable, and that the direction of European affairs has been affected for the better by the increased authority of the British Labour Movement.

The rise of the Labour Party as a political force has synchronised with a generally-recognised growth of ~~average~~ popular intelligence. Many sceptics doubt if the change goes more than skin-deep. On looking back over the last generation we must admit it to be not a bad start. Remember, we have been experimenting with inculcation rather than education, and that perhaps explains the nature of the popular culture. But the idea of popular education has been accepted and we shall obtain greater results in a few years' time. The Labour Movement in Great Britain, appealing to popular intelligence rather than popular passion (with, I admit, occasional lapses), has grown at a significant period. However superficially, humanity in the mass is making an effort to think for itself.

We are evolving a new form. Slowly, we are pushing our way towards a genuine democracy. Let him who looks forward in doubt, look back a little and be consoled.

Two of these chapters present with great weight of argument the case for Constitutional and persistent endeavour to reach the boundaries of economic reconstruction and full democratic expression. Mr. Arthur Henderson at the opening of the first volume gives conclusive reasons for the necessary and emphatic repudiation of the Communist method and spirit, and Mr. John Wheatley exposes the folly of attempting the seizure of political and economic power by armed revolution.

Although the Labour Party attaches the greatest importance to co-operation with similar movements in other lands, and is international in its outlook upon world problems, it retains its national character in the sense that British disposition and tendencies are in no way modified by a desire to practice without reserve the principles of international brotherhood which as yet in the main have only been preached.

The British disposition in political action is constitutional and pacific, and the democratic method and spirit therefore dominate the policy of the British Labour Party. Our long-established Parliamentary institutions responding in recent

years to a widely enfranchised electorate are the medium through which British Labour would modify or revolutionise those conditions of social and industrial life which Labour fervently believes to be wrong.

The Labour Party has grown upon its appeal to the intelligence and sense of justice conspicuous in our national character: in foreseeing possible future developments of our movement in Britain, we will be well advised to follow ardently the logical lines upon which the movement has already taken its place in the national life.

At the present time invitations are being circulated by some, anxious (because our movement along that road is not rapid enough to satisfy them) to seek an entirely new road; invitations in the name of the "Minority Movement," to attend a Conference "to promote Unity." Whilst I see the paradox in that, I do not belittle the efforts of enthusiasts who expend their energy in needless efforts to remind us of the dangers of bureaucracy and unwieldiness of organisation. For those reminders the Labour Movement on its industrial side may be grateful, but our unity, if it is to be real and manageable, must not be a made thing, a form, it must be a spirit and a second nature, and such unity can only grow naturally.

On the ideal but unattainable unity a great deal of sentiment is talked and written. On paper, it has often seemed to exist, but realities have shown it never to have been properly secured, either in a national or in an international sense.

Unity of action in the future can be pursued not by setting ourselves a rigid dogmatic pattern of organisation too early in our history, and sacrificing everything in an attempt to coerce bodies of workers into an acceptance of uniform systems; it can come only as the result of organic growth and experience. The growth and experience of the past generation has shown a movement in the direction of the reality of unity, and in my view, if that growth is to be most effectively continued, we must bear in mind the national temperament of our workers, and remember that we cannot expect them to carve out a model of unity based on methods suitable enough in countries otherwise situated. To set ourselves to organise the workers of Britain on a Marxist, Russian, or French Syndicalist plan, would be setting ourselves a task inappropriate to our conditions and fatal for our purpose.

The democracy towards which we are irresistibly moving,

whatever be the set-backs or diversions, represents in human history a new principle. All so-called democracies of the past have been in effect democracies of the middle-class, with a large and powerless slave-caste below. The "free and equal citizens," of ancient Athens were a minority of the total population, and the qualifications for citizenship in those days were rigorous and expensive.

In Great Britain, the first great industrial country, we are moving towards the true workers' Democracy as a natural consequence of preceding political failures, and of an increasing eagerness for economic reconstruction.

INTRODUCTORY LABOUR AS IT IS TO-DAY

BY THE RT. HON ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P.

(Home Secretary in the First Labour Government and Secretary of the Labour Party)

Birth of Independent Political Labour Democracy—Working-class Representation in Parliament—Labour Representation Committee—Numerical Growth—Electoral Progress—Labour in Parliament—The Labour Party—Constitutional Developments—A National Party—Party Machinery and Objects—Affiliated Organisations—Finance—Control and Administration—Annual Conference—National Executive—Parliamentary Candidatures—Party Headquarters—Relations with Parliamentary Labour Party—Relations with Trades Union Congress General Council—National Joint Council—Headquarters' Joint Departments—Labour and the Communist Party—Labour on the Threshold of Power and Responsibility.

THE story of the origin, growth, and consolidation of the Labour Party forms one of the most dramatic, instructive, and significant chapters in the history of modern democratic development in Great Britain.

In February 1900 was founded the Labour Representation Committee, by which name the present Labour Party was known in its early years. In February 1924 the first Labour Ministry entered the House of Commons to occupy the front Treasury Bench as His Britannic Majesty's Government. At the head of the new Government was Mr. James Ramsay MacDonald, who had acted as secretary at the inaugural meeting of the Labour Party twenty-four years earlier.

From the first real beginnings of organised Labour democracy to the rise of Labour to office had occupied less than a quarter of a century of time. Is there anything comparable with this in the history of political parties in any democratic country? No revolutionary upheaval was resorted to to carry through to success this notable and audacious effort

to secure political power for the workers. Steady persistent propaganda, continuous educational activities, and a thorough appreciation of the value of an efficient and far-flung organisation, together with the unstinted loyalty and devoted effort of multitudes of humble men and women workers, were the principal materials out of which a new and powerful political instrument was fashioned.

Nearly all the pioneers have passed on in life's eternal march—men and women who had the faith that will remove mountains. They tilled and harrowed the soil and planted the seed. They sowed that others might reap. And viewing the generous harvest of the present, one cannot look back upon the conditions in which the new Movement was launched without marvelling at the sublime faith and unshakable courage of those who undertook a task that was regarded by most of their contemporaries as impossible of accomplishment.

It is not difficult to understand the general scepticism of the period. To create a new and independent political party that aimed at securing control of the reins of political power must have seemed to most people the fantastic dream of disordered imaginations. Success obviously would involve the supersession of either of the established parties. The Conservative Party was in power and was too busily engaged in prosecuting an unpopular war to bother itself about the opinions and designs of an insignificant group of working-class delegates who indulged themselves in idle dreams. Even if they had regarded the delegates as meaning serious business, they would, no doubt, have considered themselves and their party quite safe in the knowledge that in every country a “Right” party is a permanent part of the national political machinery, and that in Great Britain, which is essentially cautious, as well as essentially democratic, such a party would always be able to count upon very substantial support from the large sections of people enjoying or aspiring to enjoy special economic or social advantages.

The Liberal Party, on the other hand, was on the eve of entering into a heritage of unequalled political power, when, strange to say, its chief embarrassment was to be the unusual one of too much power! Within their ranks in Parliament were a number of working-class members—a Liberal-Labour Group—of which Mr. John Burns was the recognised leader; and throughout the constituencies a large number of influential

Trade-Union leaders were actively identified with the party machinery.

But none of these considerations acted as a deterrent upon the new apostles of independent Labour Representation in Parliament. Indeed, far from deflecting them from their purpose, some of these considerations acted as a spur to their determination. They were men of ardent faith and enthusiasm ; but also they were shrewd and practical, and they correctly interpreted the mental stirrings of the inarticulate masses. The very indifference and contempt of opponents was an asset of real value in the early days, for the founders of the new Movement, which was considered unworthy either of attention or opposition, were able quietly and unostentatiously to build without their efforts being hampered by the violent storms of hostility and misrepresentation. Not until the general election of 1906 had taken place, in which Labour secured 29 seats, did the older parties begin to realise that a new independent force in British politics had arrived.

The Labour Party is still in the making, and its history has yet to be written. Nevertheless, it is surprising that a complete, detailed, and authoritative account of its origin, its developing organisation, and its broad general aims has not been penned. Perhaps it is that most contemporaries of this already formidable and still expanding movement are only now beginning to realise the enormous importance and the permanence of the Labour Party as a vital force in our national and international life. The historian only deals in retrospect ; he treats of the accomplished, seeking to record the facts and to interpret their meaning accurately for succeeding generations. The writing of history does not coincide with its making. The building up of the Labour Party belongs to history in the making that remains still to be dealt with by the historian.

A NEW FORCE IN POLITICS

On 27th February, 1900, 129 delegates representing 568,177 organised workers met in conference at the Memorial Hall, London. The largest individual organisation represented was the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, with 54,000 members, which had been responsible, at the Trades Union Congress of the preceding year, for the following resolution :

That this Congress, having regard to the decisions of former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the co-operation of all the co-operative, socialistic, trade union, and other working-class organisations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above-named organisations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for securing an increased number of Labour Members to the next Parliament.

This resolution had been carried by 546 votes to 434, and it was in pursuance of the instruction contained therein that the Conference in the Memorial Hall took place.

In his opening statement, Mr. W. C. Steadman, who was elected President of the Conference, said :

The great industrial army of the country, the men who were endeavouring to raise mankind, not by the shedding of human blood, but by the peaceful conquest of the ballot box, were the only class who were insufficiently represented in the House of Commons. He hoped that the result of the Conference would be a practical one. For the first time in the history of the Labour Movement all sections were drawn together in that Conference.

The Congress instruction had specifically referred to the securing of an increased number of Labour Members in the next Parliament. The delegates assembled in the Memorial Hall wisely interpreted the resolution in a much wider sense. Their general aim was set out in the first resolution adopted :

That this Conference is in favour of the working-classes being represented in the House of Commons by members of the working-classes, as being the most likely to be sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movement.

Of far greater importance, however, was a further resolution moved by Mr. Keir Hardie, which laid down the principle of independence and provided the sure basis upon which the new Movement could be built up :

That this Conference is in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own Whips and

agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged upon promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency ; and further, the members of the Labour Group shall not oppose any candidate whose candidature is being promoted in terms of Resolution 1.

LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

By the adoption of these resolutions was founded the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the present National Labour Party. Unheralded by the Press, ignored by the great party managers of the day, and frowned upon by a powerful section of Trade-Union leaders, the new organisation to promote independent Labour Representation in Parliament came into existence. I doubt if more than a very small fraction of the delegates assembled dimly sensed the great potentialities of the decisions they took. I cannot believe that even Keir Hardie, who possessed a deep and abiding faith in the ultimate good sense of the working-classes, and was gifted with remarkable prophetic vision, imagined that in less than a quarter of a century the new party that was being started in such a humble way would have swelled to its present proportions ; still less, that he or any other person in the room visualised a Labour Government in the lifetime of some of those present. What, I wonder, would have been the jocular reply in the Conference, or the contemptuous gibe outside, if the Chairman had seriously predicted that the young man who was discharging the duties of Secretary would be Great Britain's Prime Minister when still on the sunny side of sixty years of age ? True, I think it must be, that they builded better than they knew.

Almost from the outset the new movement began to thrive. Slowly but steadily it began to gain new strength and to consolidate its position. In ten years its membership was quadrupled. In twenty years there were nearly as many millions of members as there had been hundreds of thousands originally. The following table shows the development of the Labour Party from the first annual Conference :

MEMBERSHIP

| | Trade Unions. | | Trades Councils and Local Labour Parties. | Socialist Societies, etc. | | Total.* |
|--------|---------------|-------------|---|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| | No. | Membership. | | No. | Membership. | |
| 1900-1 | 41 | 353,070 | 7 | 3 | 22,861 | 375,931 |
| 1901-2 | 65 | 455,450 | 21 | 2 | 13,861 | 469,311 |
| 1902-3 | 127 | 847,315 | 49 | 2 | 13,835 | 861,150 |
| 1903-4 | 165 | 956,025 | 76 | 2 | 13,775 | 969,800 |
| 1904-5 | 158 | 855,279 | 73 | 2 | 14,730 | 900,000 |
| 1905-6 | 158 | 904,496 | 73 | 2 | 16,784 | 921,280 |
| 1906-7 | 176 | 975,182 | 83 | 2 | 20,885 | 998,338 |
| 1907 | 181 | 1,049,673 | 92 | 2 | 22,267 | 1,072,413 |
| 1908 | 176 | 1,127,035 | 133 | 2 | 27,465 | 1,158,565 |
| 1909 | 172 | 1,450,648 | 155 | 2 | 30,982 | 1,486,308 |
| 1910 | 151 | 1,394,402 | 148 | 2 | 31,377 | 1,430,539 |
| 1911 | 141 | 1,501,783 | 149 | 2 | 31,404 | 1,539,092 |
| 1912 | 130 | 1,858,178 | 146 | 2 | 31,237 | 1,895,498 |
| 1913 | † | † | 158 | 2 | 33,304 | † |
| 1914 | 101 | 1,572,391 | 179 | 2 | 33,230 | 1,612,147 |
| 1915 | 111 | 2,053,735 | 177 | 2 | 32,838 | 2,093,365 |
| 1916 | 119 | 2,170,782 | 199 | 3 | 42,190 | 2,219,764 |
| 1917 | 123 | 2,415,383 | 239 | 3 | 47,140 | 2,465,131 |
| 1918 | 131 | 2,960,409 | 389 | 4 | 52,720 | 3,013,129 |
| 1919 | 126 | 3,464,020 | 418 | 7 | 47,270 | 3,511,290 |
| 1920 | 122 | 4,317,537 | 492 | 5 | 42,270 | 4,359,807 |
| 1921 | 116 | 3,973,558 | 456 | 5 | 36,803 | 4,010,361 |
| 1922 | 102 | 3,279,276 | 482 | 5 | 31,760 | 3,311,036 |
| 1923 | 106 | 3,120,149 | 503 | 6 | 35,762 | 3,155,911 |

* The totals to 1917 in this column include the membership of the Co-operative and Women's Labour League affiliations, in addition to those of the Trade Unions and Socialist Societies.

† Owing to the operation of the Osborne Judgment it was impossible to compile membership statistics for 1913.

It will be noticed that there has been a falling off in membership since 1920. The explanation of this is quite simple. It is one of the adverse results of the prolonged industrial depression from which this nation has suffered and is still suffering. All Trade Unions have experienced great difficulties ; many of them have passed through anxious moments ; their accumulated reserves were, in some cases, used up by the long and steady drain for unemployment benefit ; and, as is usual in such times, membership fell. This loss of membership is of but a temporary character. The workers concerned remain in the Movement, but they are not recorded as paying members.

Another point which requires to be explained is the apparent falling off in the number of affiliated Trade Unions despite the progressive rise in the affiliated Trade-Union membership. Here, again, the reason is a simple one. During

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recent years there have been important developments in Trade-Union structure. The tendency has been towards amalgamation, or federation of kindred unions, with a corresponding diminution of the number of individual organisations. This very necessary co-ordination of Trade-Union forces has been proceeding at a rapid pace—especially during recent years—and is a continual form of reorganisation. Accordingly the growing adhesion of Trade-Union organisations to the Labour Party is not indicated by the number of Trade Unions affiliated, but by the Trade-Union membership affiliated.

LABOUR REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

It is interesting to note that concurrently with, and almost in proportion to, the growth of the membership of the Labour Party, its strength in Parliament has increased. Immediately following the inception of the Labour Representation Committee a General Election took place. The new body was not prepared for an immediate task of this kind. Its membership was incompletely organised and its financial resources were practically negligible. Yet fifteen candidates went to the poll, securing a total of 62,698 votes. Mr. Keir Hardie and Mr. Richard Bell (who was General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants) only were successful. In 1902 they were joined by Mr. David Shackleton (now Sir David Shackleton, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Labour), and in 1903 by Mr. Will Crooks and myself. My election for the Barnard Castle Division of Durham was the first victory for Labour in a three-cornered contest. In 1906, however, there were 50 Labour candidates contesting constituencies, and 29 won seats. The following table illustrates the progress of Labour Representation in Parliament from the General Election of 1901 up to the last General Election (1924) :

| Year. | No. of seats contested. | No. of members returned. | Total number of votes received. |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1900 | 15 | 2 | 62,698 |
| 1906 | 50 | 29 | 323,195 |
| 1910 | 78 | 40 | 505,690 |
| 1918 | 361 | 57 | 2,244,945 |
| 1922 | 414 | 142 | 4,236,733 |
| 1923 | 427 | 191 | 4,348,379 |
| 1924 | 514 | 151 | 5,487,620 |

The relative strength of the different parties at the 1924 General Election is shown by the following figures :

| Party. | No. of seats contested. | No. of unopposed returns. | Strength in Parliament. | Total vote polled. |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Conservative | 518 | 16 | 411 | 7,819,967 |
| Labour | 505 | 9 | 151 | 5,487,620 |
| Liberal | 337 | 6 | 42 | 2,937,931 |
| Others | — | 1 | 6 | 177,042 |

THE LABOUR PARTY

It is of historical interest that the Labour Representation Committee was changed in 1906 to the Labour Party in the same hall in which it first saw the light of day six years earlier. An attempt to secure this change of name had been made the previous year, but the matter was left in abeyance, because it was considered that a change of title on the eve of a General Election would be harmful to the Labour candidates. At the Conference which followed closely upon the General Election, however, the Executive Committee recommended, and the Conference agreed, that in future the title "The Labour Party" should be adopted instead of "The Labour Representation Committee." The change of title was significant because it was indicative of an important change in the position and fortunes of the new Movement. As the report of the Executive Committee stated : "Organised Labour at last has realised its power, and has learned how to use it." A membership of less than 400,000 had increased to nearly 1,000,000, and instead of only two members in Parliament there were now 29. The foundations of an independent party in Parliament had now been firmly laid, and new conditions had been created which would enable new lines of development to be pursued. Having won a footing in Parliament, the aim became definitely that of capturing the reins of government. In 1922 Labour in Parliament became the official Opposition. In 1923 a Labour Government went into office. Labour in office is but a stepping-stone to Labour in power !

This optimistic anticipation is not in the least degree destroyed by the defeat of the Labour Government at the General Election of October 1924. For while Labour Representation in the House of Commons was appreciably diminished

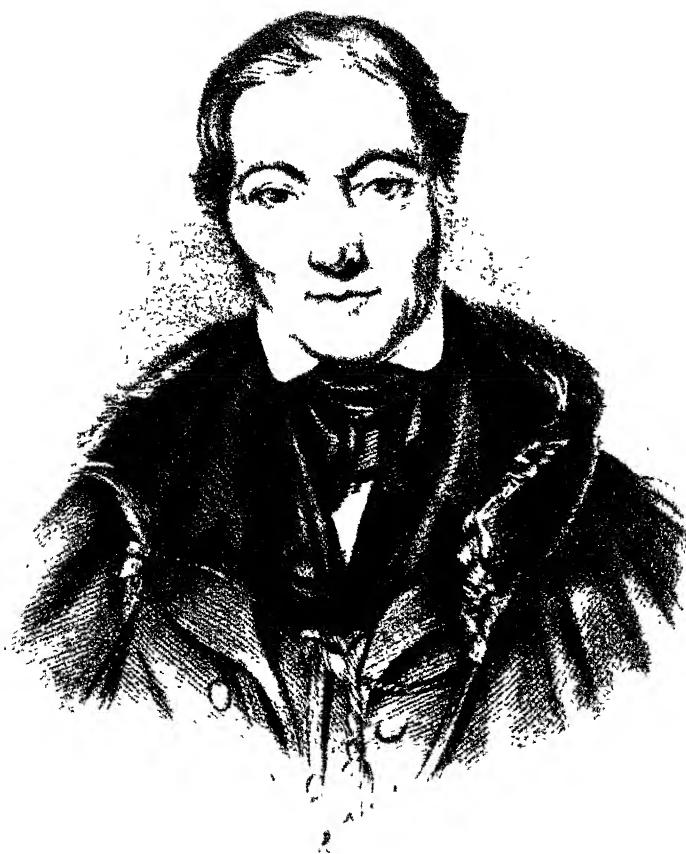
the aggregate voting strength of the Labour Party throughout the country was substantially augmented. Nor was this electoral increase mainly or even largely due to the fact that more constituencies were contested by Labour candidates than at any previous election. Genuine advancement was made, proof of which is afforded by the fact that the bulk of the new votes were obtained in the constituencies that were contested by Labour at the previous election. In 404 identical constituencies which Labour fought both in 1923 and in 1924 the aggregate vote rose from (roughly) four and a quarter millions to nearly five millions ; that is to say, nearly three-fourths of the total increase was obtained by the growth of Labour opinion on the constituencies where reaction against the Labour Government, if it had existed at all outside the imagination of opponents, would surely have been revealed in terms of electoral depreciation. In point of fact there was no falling away of Labour supporters, and the rise in the aggregate vote cannot be explained away as the gathering in of hitherto unpolled Labour votes in constituencies that had never had the opportunity before of voting for Labour candidates. The actual figures are striking, and are worth recording :

| Contested Constituencies. | Total Labour Vote. |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1923 : 404 | 4,266,682 |
| 1924 : 404 | 4,920,203 |

These figures are certainly a very encouraging indication that Labour's growing support is not to be reckoned as unreliable and variable to any appreciable extent, for despite Liberal-Conservative combinations which were opposed to Labour in a large number of constituencies, only in fifty-one contests was the Labour poll reduced, and then only to a comparatively small extent. Whatever Labour may have to regret in the change in the Parliamentary situation, it derives nothing but hope and confidence from the general electoral position to which it has attained as the result of eight elections in less than a quarter of a century.

A NATIONAL PARTY

The Labour Representation Committee was a federation consisting of national Trade Unions, Socialist societies, trades councils, and local Labour Representation Committees, and



ROBERT OWEN.
The father of British Trade Unionism.

the basis of membership continued unchanged right up to the middle of 1918. The direct membership of Socialist societies was, and is still, comparatively small. The bulk of the affiliated membership of the Labour Party was trade unionist, and the word "Labour" in the title was generally understood to mean industrial workers. In 1918 the membership clause of the Constitution of the Labour Party was amended to read :

The Labour Party shall consist of all its affiliated organisations, together with those men and women who are individual members of a local Labour Party and who subscribe to the Constitution and Programme of the Party.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this far-reaching reorganisation of the Labour Party by which was provided a definite channel through which the "workers by brain" could enter into political association with the "workers by hand." The words "working classes" carried a limited and particularist significance to the founders of the Movement. They denoted primarily, if not exclusively, the manual workers of the land. The special Conference of 1918, held in the last months of the war, gave a much wider and more accurate definition of "workers by hand as well as workers by brain."

"It was a great moment in the history of Labour," recently stated a distinguished public woman, "when the Labour Party opened its ranks to those who are called the intellectuals, the people who work with their brains—not because the intellectuals had such wonderful things to bring, but because it marked the removal of a class distinction, an acceptance of the fact by the Labour Party that all who work are on the right path, that all labour is, indeed, and in a much broader sense than we have understood, honourable."

In point of fact, the brain-worker had never been specifically excluded from membership of the Labour Party. Indeed, there are many notable instances of men and women properly belonging to the category of brain-workers who have been associated with the Labour Party, and active figures in it from its inception, and who have not only rendered distinguished services to the party, but have occupied positions of responsibility, trust, and leadership. But in the main they had entered through one or other of the affiliated Socialist societies. What the amended Constitution did was specifically

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to provide for the inclusion of brain-workers by individual membership through a local Labour Party. Whereas in the past it could be urged—perhaps with reason—that brain-workers who did not come into the party through a Trade Union or through a Socialist society were merely “tolerated,” it was now provided that they should be welcomed on terms of equality and encouraged to take up individual membership through the local constituency organisation. The effect of this change was to abolish any class distinction, and to impose upon the brain-worker the same simple condition that has always operated—that of loyalty to the Constitution and Programme of the Labour Party. It meant the definite and deliberate transforming of the Labour Party from a sectional party to a national party, and it is indisputable that this formal opening of its ranks to the brain-workers for association with the workers by hand has greatly augmented the power and influence of the Labour Party. The rapid development of constituency organisations, and the response already made by the direct affiliation through these organisations by multitudes of sympathisers and supporters who hitherto remained outside the Labour Party, encourage the belief that the steady expansion in the membership of the party will continue to how itself year by year.

AFFILIATED LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

As will be seen by a reference to the Membership table above, the number of affiliated local organisations has grown from 7 in 1900 to 503 in 1923. The chief point of interest in this rapid development of constituency organisation is the establishment of a large number of new local Labour Parties, which are more numerous than those shown in the affiliation returns. For instance, a Divisional Labour Party covering a scattered rural constituency may be directly affiliated to the National Labour Party, but the several local parties in the constituency are not eligible for affiliation. Again, in a divided borough, the Borough Labour Party may affiliate, but not the constituency Labour Parties. The constitution of the National Labour Party as revised in 1918 provides as follows for the affiliation of Trades Councils and of local Labour Parties :

Where Local Labour Parties and Trades Councils at present exist in the same area every effort must be made to amalgamate these bodies, retaining in one organisation the industrial and

political functions, and incorporating the constitution and rules for the Local Labour Parties in the rules of the amalgamated body.

Where no Local Labour Party is in existence and the Trades Council is discharging the political functions, such Trades Council shall be eligible for affiliation as a Local Labour Party, providing that its rules and title be extended so as to include Local Labour Party functions.

Where a Local Labour Party and a Trades Council exist in the same area, the Trades Council shall be eligible to be affiliated to the Local Labour Party, but not to the National Party except in such cases where the Trades Council was affiliated to the National Party prior to November 1, 1917. In these cases the Executive Committee shall have power to continue national affiliation on such conditions as may be deemed necessary.

Trades Councils included under Section (c) shall pay an annual affiliation fee of 30s.

ORGANISATION OF WOMEN

Special attention has been paid to the importance of the newly-enfranchised women electors and to the problem of organising them as members of the Labour Party. During recent years there has been a remarkable increase both in women's sections of the Labour Party and in women's membership. This essential work, which comes under the care of the party's Chief Woman Officer and her staff of District Women Organisers, is meeting with marked and growing success. The services rendered by the Women Sections and by the energetic and capable voluntary women workers have been a valuable contribution to the Labour Movement and have played a considerable part in the electoral successes, both parliamentary and local government, that Labour has gained. The number of these sections in 1924 was over 1,300, while the estimated membership in May of last year was not less than 150,000. Both the number of Women's Sections and the total membership have been increased since that time. In this matter, as in others, the Labour Party has outdistanced its rivals and the organisation of women within the Labour Party continues rapidly to expand.

FINANCE

The Labour Party is financed by its affiliated organisations by the payment of an annual affiliation fee. Trade Unions,

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Socialist Societies, Co-operative Societies, and other organisations directly affiliated to the Labour Party (but not being affiliated local Labour Parties with Trades Councils) pay 3d. per member per annum (with a minimum of 30s.) to the Central Party Funds. The constitution of the party provides that: "The membership of a Trade Union for this purpose shall be those members contributing to the political fund of the Union established under the Trade Union Act, 1913." In other words, a Trade Union pays affiliation fees to the Labour Party for the whole of its membership, less the number of members who "contract out" from contributing to the political fund of the union. Trades Councils, which were directly affiliated to the Labour Party prior to 1917, and which continue in direct affiliation, pay an annual affiliation fee of 30s. Local Labour Parties must charge individually enrolled members, male a minimum of 1s. per annum, and female 6d. per annum; and 2d. per member so collected must be remitted to the Central Office, with a minimum of 30s. as the affiliation fee of the local Labour Party. Apart from a few minor items of income, which are negligible, the income of the Labour Party is derived entirely from its affiliation fees. This income for the year ending 31st December, 1923, was £56,626 11s. 11d., and was made up, apart from Balance brought forward and Literature sales, as follows:

| | £ | s. | d. |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|
| Affiliation fees from Local Labour Parties and Trades Councils | 955 | 7 | 3 |
| Trade Union and Socialist Societies | 48,385 | 15 | 0 |
| Total affiliation fees | £49,341 | 2 | 3 |

CONTROL AND ADMINISTRATION

The supreme control of the Labour Party is invested in the Party Conference, which meets annually. The Constitution provides that: "The work of the Party shall be under the direction and control of the Party Conference, which shall itself be subject to the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Party." The Annual Conference alone, of course, has the power to amend the Constitution and Standing Orders. This conference is composed of delegates representing only affiliated organisations. Persons eligible as delegates must be paying *bona fide* members or paid permanent officials of

the organisation sending them. No delegate may represent more than one organisation, and no Member of Parliament who has not joined the Parliamentary Labour Party is eligible as a delegate. Although the old condition imposed upon Labour Members and candidates of " Signing the Constitution " has long been dispensed with, the Standing Orders of the Labour Party Conference provide that every person nominated to serve as a delegate shall individually accept the constitution and principles of the Labour Party. While no formal pledge is exacted, the moral obligation is imposed, and its acceptance is a matter rather of honour than of form. Members of affiliated organisations who have claimed exemption from the payment of political contributions under the Trade Union Act, 1912, are, of course, not eligible as delegates.

The Annual Conference is composed as follows :

Trade Unions and other societies affiliated to the Party may send one delegate for each 1,000 members on which fees are paid.

Local Labour Party delegates may be either men or women resident or having a place of business in the constituency they represent, and shall be appointed as follows :

In Borough and County Constituencies returning one Member to Parliament, the Local Labour Party may appoint one delegate.

In undivided Boroughs returning two Members, two delegates may be appointed.

In divided Boroughs one delegate may be appointed for each separate constituency within the area. The Local Labour Party within the constituency shall nominate and the Central Labour Party of the Divided Borough shall appoint the delegates. In addition to such delegates, the Central Labour Party in each Divided Borough may appoint one delegate.

An additional woman delegate may be appointed for each constituency in which the number of affiliated and individual women members exceeds 500.

Trades Councils shall be entitled to one delegate.

The members of the National Executive, including the Treasurer, the Members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and the duly-sanctioned Parliamentary Candidates shall be *ex-officio* members of the Party Conference, but shall, unless delegates, have no right to vote.

Discussions at the Annual Conference are restricted to matters arising out of the Annual Report of the Executive Committee and to resolutions or amendments to resolutions

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submitted in accordance with Standing Orders. The rules governing the Conference Agenda are as follows :

Notice of resolutions for the Annual Conference shall be sent to the Secretary at the Office of the Party not later than April 1st for inclusion in the first Agenda which shall be forthwith issued to the affiliated organisations.

Notice of Amendments to the Resolutions in the first Agenda, and Nominations for the Executive, Treasurer, Auditors (2), Annual Conference Arrangements Committee (5), shall be forwarded to the Secretary not later than May 16th, for inclusion in the final Agenda of the Annual Conference.

No business which does not arise out of the Resolutions on the Agenda shall be considered by the Party Conference, unless recommended by the Executive or the Conference Arrangements Committee.

When the Annual Conference has, by resolution, made a declaration of a general policy or principle, no motion having for its object the reaffirmation of such policy or principle shall appear on the Agenda for a period of three years from the time such declaration was made, except such resolutions as are, in the opinion of the Executive, of immediate importance.

Decisions are decided by a card vote when demanded ; voting is by cards only issued as follows :

Trade Unions and other affiliated societies shall receive one Voting Card for each 1,000 members or fraction thereof paid for.

Trades Councils affiliated under Section 8, clause *c*, shall receive one Voting Card.

Every Local Labour Party shall receive one Voting Card for each delegate sent in respect of each Parliamentary Constituency within its area.

Central Labour Parties in Divided Boroughs shall receive one Voting Card.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Although the Annual Conference is the supreme authority of the Labour Party, the real executive authority is the Executive Committee of the Party, which is elected annually by the Conference. This Committee consists of : "A," 13 representatives of national societies ; "B," 5 representatives of local Labour Parties ; and "C," 4 women representatives. Nominations may be made as follows :

Each affiliated national organisation is entitled to nominate one candidate for List A ; and two candidates if the membership exceeds 500,000. Each candidate must be a *bona fide* member of the organisation by which he or she is nominated.

Each Parliamentary Constituency organisation, through its Local Labour Party or Trades Council, may nominate one candidate for List B, and the candidate so nominated must be resident or have his or her place of business within the area of the nominating Local Labour Party.

Each affiliated organisation is entitled to nominate one woman candidate for List C, and two candidates if the membership exceeds 500,000, whether such nominees are or are not members of the nominating organisation.

The full Conference elects the Executive Committee by ballot vote on the card basis from the three lists of nominations confined to delegates appointed to attend the Annual Conference. No member of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress is eligible for nomination to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. In addition, the treasurer elected separately by the Conference is a member of the Committee.

The Secretary of the Labour Party is elected by the Party Conference, and is the chief permanent executive officer.

The National Executive is responsible for the conduct of the general work of the party. It is required to take steps to ensure that the Labour Party is represented by a properly constituted organisation in each constituency in which this is found practicable ; it has to give effect to the decisions of the Party Conference, and to interpret the Constitution and Standing Orders and Rules in all cases of dispute subject to the right of appeal to the Annual Conference by the organisation or person concerned.

The committee meets, as a rule, for two or three days each month to deal with matters of policy, organisation, finance, administration, etc. Sub-committees are appointed for special purposes, and these committees function practically automatically, reporting on their work to the main committee from time to time.

LABOUR IN PARLIAMENT

The Labour Party in the House of Commons is the Parliamentary wing of the Labour Movement. Within the limits

imposed by acceptance of the Constitution of the National Labour Party, it enjoys a large measure of local autonomy as regards internal economy and parliamentary practices. It elects its own officers, holds its party meetings, and decides its plans for giving effect to party policy. Proper provision has, however, been made for consultation between the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party. The Constitution lays it down that the National Executive shall confer with the Parliamentary Labour Party at the opening of each Parliamentary Session, and also at any other time when the National Executive and the Parliamentary Party may desire such conference on any matters relating to the work and progress of the party, or to the efforts necessary to give effect to the General Programme of the party.

HEADQUARTERS

The work of the Conference and of the Executive Committee is carried out by a large and efficient Headquarters organisation under the direction of the Secretary of the Labour Party. This organisation is composed of the Central Office staff, and men and women district organisers. Electoral organisation, candidatures, women's sections, party propaganda, and machinery developments are all directed from and controlled by the Central Office. In addition to the secretary, there are an assistant-secretary, national agent, chief woman organiser, and finance officer, with their respective staffs. Throughout the country there are men and women organisers whose activities are directed by the appropriate department at the Central Office. The development of the Central Office organisation, and of the outside organisation which is attached to it, has proceeded rapidly during recent years, and the expert and efficient staff that has been brought together has been an important factor in the electoral progress made by the Labour Party since the end of the war. In addition, departments exist for dealing with publicity and literature, international relations, and research and information. These departments, formed originally by the Labour Party, have been transformed into joint departments under a scheme of co-ordination adopted by the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party in 1921.

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATURES

While Local Constituency Organisations have initiative and selective powers with regard to Labour Parliamentary Candidatures, the National Executive is responsible for ensuring that such candidatures shall be strictly in accordance with the Constitution of the Labour Party, and, accordingly, it is invested in principle with the power of veto which takes the form of a right to grant or withhold endorsement of the candidature of any name submitted to it for approval as an official Labour candidate. In actual practice, however, it has rarely been called upon to exercise the veto, and only then because the selection conference has not been or has not acted in harmony with the spirit of the Party Constitution. The National Executive is instructed to co-operate with the Local Labour Party in any constituency with a view to nominating a Labour candidate at any Parliamentary General or By-Election. But before any Parliamentary candidate can be regarded as finally adopted for a constituency as a candidate for the Labour Party, his candidature must be sanctioned by the National Executive. Candidates so approved must appear before the constituencies under the designation of "Labour Candidate" only. At any General Election they must include in their Election Addresses and give prominence in their campaigns to the issues for that Election as defined by the National Executive from the General Party Programme. If they are elected they are to act in harmony with the Constitution and Standing Orders of the party in seeking to discharge the responsibilities established by Parliamentary practice. They become members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, receive its Whips, and generally conform to party discipline both as regards practice and policy as defined by the leaders and Executive Committee of the party. Discipline is, however, less a matter of rigid regulation than a sense of moral duty and personal honour. The spirit of independence is not destroyed nor does the party organisation in Parliament deprive them of individual rights or aim at turning them into mere voting ciphers. The Party Meeting, which is a permanent feature of the organisation, is an adequate safeguard against this danger and ensures an opportunity to each individual member of the party to make his personal contribution to the common pool of suggestions regarding internal policy and parliamentary strategy.

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GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Close association is maintained between the industrial side of the Labour Movement and the political side, and there is real co-operation between the two on matters of common concern. In 1921 the growing recognition of the need for the fullest co-ordination of policy and method within the Labour Movement as a whole led to the adoption of a scheme of co-ordination which provided for the setting up of joint machinery to deal with common matters of policy and administration. The proposals formulated and adopted were designed to enable Labour industrially and politically to speak with one voice on all questions of national importance and to pursue one policy in support of its common ends. In the first instance, the scheme provided for the Constitution of a National Joint Council representing the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and the Parliamentary Labour Party. It consists of the chairman, secretary, and three other members of each of the three bodies. The duties of the National Joint Council are :

- (a) To consider all questions affecting the Labour Movement as a whole, and make provision for taking immediate and united action on all questions of National emergency.
- (b) To endeavour to secure a common policy and joint action, whether by legislation or otherwise, on all questions affecting the workers as producers, consumers, and citizens.
- (c) To consult, when necessary, a Joint Conference, consisting of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Executive, together with a number of Parliamentary Members, which, with the Labour Party Executive, will be equal in number to the numbers of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.
- (d) To present an annual report to the Trades Union Congress, and the Labour Party Conference and the Parliamentary Party.

The chairman and secretary of this joint body are the Chairman of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Secretary of the Labour Party respectively.

JOINT DEPARTMENTS

In addition, the scheme provided for the setting up and development of joint departments under the joint control of the two National Committees. Joint departments were con-

sidered especially desirable for research, publicity, international affairs, and legal advice "in order to prevent overlapping in the work of the staffs of the two national bodies and the consequent duplication of effort and expenditure, and to secure both greater efficiency and an extension of these aspects of the work of the Labour Movement." The Labour Party, as I have already stated, had departments in existence for some time dealing with publicity, research, and international affairs. It was provided that there should be, in the first place, four common departments, as follows : Department of Research and Information ; Department of International Affairs ; Press and Publicity Department ; Legal Department.

Each Department was placed in charge of a responsible officer provided with the necessary staff and equipment. It is the duty of each Department to undertake (a) The work required of it by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, both individually and jointly ; (b) such work as may be necessary for the National Joint Council ; and (c) special work for affiliated organisations.

The Department of Research is responsible for : (a) Undertaking research on economic and political questions ; (b) the collection of information on all matters of interest to the Labour Movement ; (c) the maintenance of a common library of official documents and books ; (d) supplying information on request from organisations affiliated to the Trades Union Congress or the Labour Party ; (e) setting up and maintaining advisory committees on economic, social, and political problems.

The Publicity Department is responsible for : (a) Press publicity and the supply of information to newspapers ; (b) the editorship and production of such papers, journals, or other regular publications as may be decided upon ; (c) the preparation and publication of leaflets, pamphlets, and other literature.

The International Department has to : (a) Collect information on all international questions ; (b) record the activities of the international sides of the Labour Movement ; and (c) prepare for publication, through the Publicity Department, any international documents that may be agreed upon.

The Legal Department, which has not yet been set up, will be responsible for : (a) Preparing bills ; (b) examining and reporting upon bills submitted to Parliament ; (c) supplying such assistance as may be required by the Parliamentary

Party ; (d) supplying legal information and advice to organisations affiliated to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party ; and (e) watching all legal decisions affecting Labour interests.

A Joint Sub-committee of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party supervises the work of each of the four Departments. The responsible officer of each Department is the Secretary of the Committee supervising his Department.

This new machinery—the National Joint Council and the joint departments—are now a permanent part of the organisation of the Labour Movement.

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

No account of the Labour Party, however summary in form, would be adequate, especially at this juncture, that did not explain its relations with and attitude towards the Communist Party. There exists a deal of popular misapprehension on this point, which has been stimulated into widespread prejudice and fear and translated into substantial electoral opposition. Avowed Communists in Great Britain form a negligible quantity. Their propaganda makes no headway, and of late what little influence they exercised has been diminishing. But their persistent efforts to join up with the political Labour Movement and to secure a "united front" with the industrial movement, as well as their constant endeavours to foster among the public the opinion or suspicion that they are in some definite, though carefully hidden, connection with the Labour Party, have been effectively used by Labour's political opponents to tar the Labour Party with the Communist brush. How successful these efforts were at a crucial moment was shown by the results of the General Election in 1924. The first Labour Government was brought to an end, and Labour representation in Parliament was reduced by 25 per cent., despite an equal increase in the aggregate Party vote, in a great anti-Communist crusade by the Conservative and Liberal parties. For once the Labour Party suffered severely from the use of the Bolshevik bogey by opponents. If the Labour Party stood for Bolshevism or for Communism no ground for complaint could exist at the tactics employed against it during the election. The plain and undeniable fact, however, is that the Labour Party

has neither direct nor indirect connection or association with the Communist Party, and, further, that it has definitely and officially repudiated the aims and methods of the Communists and refused to allow the Communist Party to become affiliated with it. But while the position of the Labour Party, in respect of Communism and the Communists has been made unmistakably clear, so carefully and skilfully have the facts been suppressed or distorted that there are multitudes of electors to whom the Labour Party and the Communist Party are one and the same thing.

Much might be written regarding the conflict of aim and method between the two parties. Masses of evidence could be adduced to prove convincingly to the unprejudiced mind that the parties are separate and distinct. But for present purposes it is sufficient to cite Annual Conference decisions and Labour Party Executive Committee's recommendations regarding the Communist Party and what it stands for. The issues involved were thoroughly discussed at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party held in London in October 1924, and decisions taken following the presentation by the Executive Committee of a reasoned document dealing with "The Labour Party and the Communist Party." This document has the merit of being official and authoritative, and it sets out clearly and frankly the actual position occupied by the Labour Party in this matter. The document is of such importance as to justify its reproduction as a whole, and having been endorsed by a properly elected Annual Delegate Conference, it represents the considered view of the Labour Party. Its terms were as follows :

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

"The way of the United Front leads ultimately to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."—*Radek at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922.*

"Now during the epoch of the Communist International there is also a clean division—those who are for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat—and those who are against it."—*Zinoviev in the "Communist International" (No. 4, New Series).*

The Executive Committee of the Party has recently had under consideration the renewed application for affiliation of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and, in conjunction therewith, the general relationship of both the National and Local Labour Parties with members of the Communist Party. As a result, the

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following recommendations will be submitted to the forthcoming Annual Conference for discussion and decision :

(1) That the application for affiliation from the Communist Party be refused.

(2) That no member of the Communist Party shall be eligible for endorsement as a Labour Candidate for Parliament or any Local Authority.

In conveying these recommendations to the various affiliated organisations composing the Party, the Executive Committee wish to state the reasons which have actuated them in putting them forward.

The relationships of the Labour Party and the Communist Party have occupied the attention of our Annual Conference on more than one occasion, and was the subject of a lengthy report from the Executive Committee so recently as 1922.

The affiliation of the Communist Party has been consistently refused on the ground that neither its objects nor methods are in harmony with those of the Labour Party.

The Labour Party seeks to achieve the Socialist Commonwealth by means of Parliamentary democracy.

The Communist Party seeks to achieve the " Dictatorship of the Proletariat " by armed revolution.

The Labour Party realises that, unlike old Russia, with its autocracy, its memories of Siberia and the knout, the serfdom of the sixties, and its Czar-kept Duma of more recent days, this country possesses almost a wholly-enfranchised adult population, and a Parliament and system of government that will respond to the direction of the working people, so soon as they express intelligent desire for change through the ballot-box.

The Communist Party believes that Parliament and other Administrative Authorities are simply machines that should only be exploited to their own destruction ; that there is no hope in the masses of the people rising to the height of their political responsibilities ; and that, therefore, so soon as a minority in the community feel that they are sufficiently powerful to revolutionise the present political and industrial system, they are justified in using power, armed and otherwise, to achieve that purpose. Pending the speedy conversion of the masses, should they disagree with this procedure, the correct position is that they should be held down by force, deprived of liberty of speech, organisation, and press, and such expressions in the direction of freedom of opinion will be dealt with as counter-revolutionary symptoms.

The Labour Party holds a fundamental objection to tyranny, quite apart from the social, political, or industrial standing of the tyrant. In its opinion political intelligence wisely directed is more enduring in its results than coercion, no matter how well-intentioned.

Some members of the Communist Party have been successful in the Parliamentary ballots of their Trade Unions, or have been selected by Local Labour Parties to contest seats on our behalf.

It is at this stage that the Executive Committee now feels it is justified in recommending that further action should be taken. It urges the Annual Conference to empower it to refuse endorsement to members of the Communist Party as Labour Party Candidates. It feels that while something—though not much—may be said for the participation of Communists, holding two conflicting principles, in our Local and National Conferences, the Executive must be in a position to guarantee that its Candidates—those who stand publicly for our policy—do support that policy whole-heartedly. Candidates should not be allowed to secure Labour Party endorsement for Communist Party ends, no matter how conscientious their loyalty to Communism, nor how large or influential the Trade Union with which they may be associated.

It has been suggested that this recommendation is an unwarrantable interference with the rights of the affiliated organisations. We cannot accept that implication. In the past the Party has refused to accept Trade Union Candidates who were opposed to our principles, and who were members of an opposing political party. The Trade Union concerned accepted the position and refrained from submitting such Candidates for endorsement, realising that the acceptance of the Party Constitution demands a sense of loyalty to Labour Party principles that is inconsistent with continued loyalty to another Party and another set of principles.

Organisations can select such of their members as they please as Parliamentary Candidates, but the Party Executive is entrusted with the guardianship of Party principles, and has a right to see that among our standard-bearers in the constituencies there shall not be numbered men and women who rejoice in active opposition to the Party and all it fundamentally stands for.

If there are Trade Unions and Local Parties who desire to run and finance Communist members as Candidates, no action on the part of the Party Executive will prevent them doing so. We do suggest, however, that such Candidates should run under the colours of their own Party and not under ours.

The suggestion that this proposal is dictated out of consideration for middle-class supporters of the Party, like so much that figures as Communist criticism, is puerile nonsense. The differences that have arisen in every country where the Communists have sought to capture the Socialist and Labour Movement have not been based on class lines, but on honestly-held, but incompatible principles of Socialist method and progress—views, indeed, that may be held quite sincerely by people in all ranks of life.

In the opinion of the Executive Committee it is time the rank and file of the Movement was given an opportunity of realising

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the conflict between our own principles and those of the Communist Party, and to say definitely and distinctly that the first quality the Party is entitled to look for in its Candidates is straightforward honesty in the acceptance of our principles, our methods and our objects. The Conference is urged to say quite clearly : "No other need apply."

It is better that the Party should develop its strength in assured and steadfast lines, than it should seek to conciliate vitally conflicting purposes, or to achieve a fictitious agreement where none is really possible.

In addition to the Committee's two recommendations regarding the Communist Party's application for affiliation and the ineligibility of Communist Party members for endorsement as Labour candidates for Parliament or any Local Authority, the Sutton Divisional Labour Party was responsible for a resolution proposing "that no member of the Communist Party be eligible for membership of the Labour Party." All three resolutions were adopted by the Conference, the Communist Party being refused affiliation by 3,185,000 votes to 193,000 votes. In the light of these decisions, therefore, it should be clear to every fair-minded person that the Communist Party has neither more nor less association with, and its members influence upon, the Labour Party than they have with the Conservative Party or the Liberal Party.

CONCLUSION

Labour has now definitely emerged from its old position of subordination to the historic political parties in this country. It has grown powerful in numbers. It has served its apprenticeship in the work of governing. Its period of office was admittedly short ; but, despite the formidable difficulties which confronted it, the first Labour Government has, by its efforts and accomplishments as a whole, gained the respect and confidence of large masses of the people who hitherto were violently opposed to the idea of Labour being called upon in any circumstances to shoulder the responsibilities of government. That it made mistakes it would be foolish to deny. A Government never existed which did not make mistakes. What is more to the point, is that it achieved a larger measure of success than even its warmest friends could have foreseen, while it avoided pitfalls and disastrous adventures which had been predicted as inevitable. The General Election



ALEXANDER MACDONALD.
The First Labour Member.

brought about the fall of the Government and resulted in the return of a Conservative Administration possessing a record Conservative majority. In point of fact, however, the election provided neither a Conservative victory nor a Labour defeat. Broadly speaking, the election result was an emphatic declaration against Communism, and though the anti-Communist attack was deliberately engineered to damage Labour, the addition of a million and a quarter votes to Labour's highest aggregate is ample proof that it is still marching forward. With its continually growing numbers, enlarging mind, and developing outlook there is reasonable ground upon which to rest the hope and belief that the second Labour Government will be in power as well as in office, and that the Labour Party, which is now the second largest single party in the State, will soon become the largest party.

But we still remain "on the threshold of power." Labour in office but not in power was an interesting, useful, and instructive experiment. It gave added prestige to Labour as well as training and experience in administration to a goodly proportion of the personnel of the Parliamentary Party. From a House of Commons standpoint Labour has nothing to fear at the prospect of finding itself responsible, at no distant date, for the conduct of national affairs as a free and independent agent. What it has to consider, however, is the question of obtaining sufficient electoral support to enable it to create and grasp the opportunity. So far as the industrial and semi-industrial constituencies are concerned, Labour has nothing to fear from either of the other two parties. In these constituencies its greatest power lies to-day, and the last General Election proved conclusively that it would prove a very difficult task to loosen its grasp upon them. In the rural and county constituencies the position is neither so sound and satisfactory at the moment nor so promising for the future. The urban workers have become politically conscious quickly because they were already industrially conscious. The rural workers, on the other hand, are backward industrially and do not respond either so quickly or in such large numbers to the political gospel preached by Labour. But even in these areas evidence is to be found of a gradual change, and the substantial vote obtained in many of them by Labour candidates, though far from being sufficient to win the constituencies for Labour, is substantial enough to encourage the view that concentrated effort will in time radically change their

political complexion. It is not many years since even in industrial constituencies Labour candidates could not secure a thousand votes, and these same constituencies are to-day Labour strongholds. But it must be admitted that the advanced conditions of the urban constituencies are due in part to the fact that our propaganda activities have been mainly concentrated upon them, whereas in the widespread rural and county constituencies, which are far more difficult to work because of their extended character, such work as has been done in the Labour Cause has been accomplished chiefly by the small bands of local adherents with comparatively small support from outside sources. The National Executive of the Labour Party are fully mindful of this fact and of the problem it creates politically, while, at the same time, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress are aware of the peculiar Trade-Union difficulties presented in these areas. Both politically and industrially steps are being taken to remedy the position, and a campaign of concentrated effort is being embarked upon with a view to strengthening and expanding Labour and Trade-Union organisation. It is not sufficient for the Labour Party to be the predominant force in the industrial constituencies. An independent Labour Government, free from the embarrassments that were an almost daily experience of the first Labour Government because of its minority position, can only be forthcoming if and when Labour has made a substantial breach into rural Britain. In all quarters progress is being made. New recruits from every section of society are joining Labour's ranks. Urban constituencies are making themselves responsible for encouraging and assisting the efforts of Labour workers in the backward rural constituencies. In a variety of ways the problem is being tackled with spirit and enthusiasm and knowledge born of long experience in the work of building up strong and active local Labour Parties in areas where Labour is now all-powerful. By this persistent propaganda and organisation development it is confidently believed that Labour will be enabled to pass over the threshold to power and responsibility. From our striking successes of the past we draw our confident hopes for the future.

CHAPTER I

WHY A LABOUR PARTY?

BY THE RT. HON. JOHN WHEATLEY, M.P.
(*Minister of Health in the First Labour Government*)

Why a Labour Party?—Meaning of the Labour Problem—The Worker under Capitalism—Effects of Industrial Revolution—Rise of the Proletariat—Class Consciousness—Capitalist Impersonality—Labour's Historic Mission—Social Divisions—Methods of Socialism—Socialism or Social Reform?

IN writing an exposition of the fundamental ideas underlying the policy of the Labour Movement, the thought uppermost in my mind is of the long record of human sorrow and self-sacrificing toil that has made the Movement possible. The path to victory is strewn with the bodies of countless "unknown warriors"; the thousands who sowed but did not live to see the reaping. I am not thinking merely of the victimised Trade Unionist or the persecuted Labour agitator. To me every noble soul throughout the ages who has rebelled against tyranny and oppression has contributed his share to the making of what is now known as the Labour Party.

There still are people, I suppose, who question the need for a political working-class organisation, people who believe that alliances of employers and employed will solve industrial and political problems. I do not agree with those people. Conditions bring forth men and movements, and no Labour Movement would have been possible unless conditions had been favourable to its birth. It is equally true that the conditions which called it into being have not changed. The collar on the neck has been eased in places where it hurt most, but the collar remains.

The purpose of this volume is to trace the various phases of modern thought which made the present movement possible, and this introduction is intended to summarise why a Labour Party is necessary at all.

In choosing my title "Why a Labour Party?" I am not

concerned merely with a name. Any party which could give economic freedom and security to all the people would have my support. We have three political parties. It is a fair assumption that had the Liberal or Conservative Party been willing and able to give the working-class economic security that security would have been given long ago. Each has had lengthy periods of power with majorities capable of carrying any measures it chose, and each has lamentably failed even to bring a decent standard of life to the major portion of the population.

There always will, I suppose, be ground for argument as to whether the Labour Party's programme can bring security to the working-class, but there is no room for argument as to its willingness. Our economic theories may fail, but any party or movement created for no other purpose than the abolition of social injustice is at least entitled to be given credit for the honesty of its intentions. No student of history will dispute the fact that this, and this only, was the reason which animated the minds of those men who first conceived the idea of a great independent political Labour Party. A great deal of the early struggle was doubtless merely undirected revolt against social injustice, and without any preconceived idea as to causes and still less to remedies. History shows one long series of revolts, each apparently quite unconnected with the other, but each, nevertheless, an expression of the same demand for human freedom.

There may seem little connection between the Israelitish strikers in Egypt, revolting because they were expected to make bricks without straw, and the modern Labour Party administering in every branch of a complicated State machinery. Yet the difference is no greater than their method of making bricks as compared with the present method of brickmaking. The intention of the ruling class of that day was to secure that bricks be made at the least possible cost, just as it is to-day. As the methods of brickmaking have evolved and the power to exploit is proportionately greater, so also have new ideas evolved to resist the exploitation. It is a very long step from the cap-in-hand attitude of the strikers asking for straw and the modern workmen asking for the brickwork, but the aspiration behind the respective demands is the same. It is the age-long revolt against tyranny and the age-long demand for human freedom. The method of satisfying the demand is different, that is all.

More learned writers than myself could and doubtless would trail the reader through the mists of antiquity to the very doubtful beginning of things in order to prove what is hardly relevant or necessary to modern Socialist thought. Sufficient for me is the fact that the Labour Party owes its inception to the desires of men for a more equitable system of society than the present. Because of that I am satisfied as to the honesty of its intentions.

If we assume that the yearning for spiritual freedom has existed from the beginning of time, it is only a natural outcome that certain movements to give expression to that yearning should spring into being. It is not my intention to give an historical survey of the various movements that have arisen from time nor to give a connected narrative of the various struggles between the exploiters and the exploited. My only point is that certain social injustices existed, and because of the failure of the other parties to abolish these injustices a Labour Party was absolutely essential. A new weapon was needed if the fight against exploitation was to have any measure of success. The workers had been slowly and painfully learning their lessons. The futility of the revolts of the peasants under Ball and Wat Tyler, the frantic efforts of the Luddites to prevent exploitation by smashing machinery, had demonstrated that some more scientific weapon was essential. For a time men's hopes centred on the power of the Trade Unions, but well-nigh a century of the strike and lock-out has shown that that method, however indispensable, is not the last word in modern methods of class warfare. The strike was found to be costly and often ineffective. In addition it was found that legislation in many cases could have prevented the necessity for many of the bitter struggles which took place in the industrial field. The workers were now turning their minds to political as well as industrial action, and much money and time were spent in sending deputations to London to lobby members of the House of Commons. The futility of this method was soon demonstrated. It was an easy matter for the more advanced members of the working-class to point out that the man who failed to grant their demands even with the threat of a strike would be no more amenable if they went cap in hand to him in the Lobby of the House of Commons. The next step was an independent parliamentary party, pledged to a programme of industrial and social reform.

Whilst the yearning for spiritual freedom and human liberty has always existed, certain material factors played a part in the evolution of the methods of class warfare. The Liberty of the Individual is a much-abused phrase, and can be quoted in favour of any form of tyranny, as in the case of the resistance of the cotton lords to any interference with the intolerable conditions in their factories. Liberty in the abstract is something which has always appealed to the idealists of mankind, but largely purely material conditions determined the birth of the new political movement.

It was the recognition that so long as a small section of the community owned and controlled the means of human life, just so long would the remainder be compelled to live under conditions determined by that small section.

The introduction of steam power and the coming of the machine, able with its inexorable whirl to turn out goods a thousandfold as compared to the handcraftsman, left the worker virtually at the mercy of a new employing class. With the land of the country in private hands the worker was obliged to beg of someone the liberty to earn shelter and food for himself and his family. This permission was granted on condition that the person so employed would be capable of producing not only what he received as wages but also something for the maintenance of the family of the man who employed him. He was given in wages sufficient to keep himself in bodily health, but never sufficient to buy back all the goods he had produced. His power to produce increased out of all proportion to his opportunity to purchase and consume, and in spite of many artificial aids it was found increasingly difficult to dispose of all the goods produced. Each year saw in consequence large numbers of men and women taken from the ranks of the producers and their energies diverted to the task of ministering to the personal and bodily wants of the non-producing class. Housemaids, coachmen, grooms, butlers, and latterly chauffeurs were added to the ranks of the non-producing consumers. Large numbers of men and women were diverted from useful productive work to work which had for its object the providing of luxuries for the small section of the community which owned the tools of production. Whole towns and thousands of workmen are engaged to-day in the making of motor-cars, yet scarcely a workman owns a car. Yet in spite of all this, in spite of the numbers of productive workers who no longer do any necessary pro-

ductive work, in spite of the thousands of soldiers, sailors, and policemen who are employed largely to guard the property of the few, it is found that those remaining in useful productive industry are able to produce far more goods than can be sold. The market becomes glutted and the workman is paid off.

By some curious process of reasoning it is assumed that as the workman consumer cannot buy all the goods he produces when earning full wages, the solution lies in giving him no wages at all. A standing example of the increased productivity of the workers is to be found in the years between 1914 and 1924. For the purposes of the War nearly 5,000,000 men were taken from industry and placed in the fields of Flanders and elsewhere. In addition to that all the men who could be spared were turned to the making of munitions of war. Since the War millions of men have been unemployed literally for years, yet in spite of that there is scarcely one commodity that is scarce at the present moment.

That, then, is the position in which the worker finds himself to-day. Periodically unemployed and always living on the verge of poverty, not because he cannot produce sufficient to satisfy his human needs, but because he is able to produce too much. In addition he is allowed no say whatever as to his conditions of employment. Any attempt at workshop control is ruthlessly crushed. He knows nothing whatever of the cost of producing an article, and can only assume the truth of most employers' statements that their works are run at a loss.

In many cases he is quite unaware of the identity of his employer. The modern joint stock company has largely superseded the small employer who knew each individual workman. Large industries are now controlled by a paid manager, whose sole business and interest is to produce dividends. Because of this the tendency to balance dividends and the retention of a decent salaried job against legitimate claims of the workman inevitably tilts the scale in favour of the former. He has seen every attempt that was made to humanise his factory life and to safeguard his life and limbs met with the most bitter opposition. When Bills were introduced granting compensation for accidents, he saw the employing class use every effort to make the reforms ineffective and provide every possible loophole for escape. Outside his factory life, he was compelled to live in the most wretched insanitary dwellings. Had no other type of house been possible he might

have been content, but having eyes to see it was inevitable that he should contrast the housing conditions in well-to-do parts of all our industrial towns with the conditions given to the working-class. If anyone doubts the existence of a poverty problem let him visit the working-class quarter of any town and he will find his answer in the housing conditions. He will also find a perfect illustration of how the class war operates. Every one of those houses was built on the belief that the house which was not good enough for the well-to-do was good enough for the working-class. Questions of health and hygiene were not considered. If bad housing conditions killed off thousands of children and shortened the lives of the parents it was nobody's business. When they died off there was no shortage of others to take their place. The weakest to the wall was the law of a ruthless capitalism ; legislation to improve conditions was ridiculed as grandmotherly, or fiercely fought as an interference with the rights of private property.

In this atmosphere of class hatreds and class jealousy the Labour Party was born. Every conceivable method from the open revolt of the peasantry to the utopian schemes of Robert Owen had been tried and failed. The strike and the boycott and the magnanimity of the Liberal Party in adopting several working-men candidates whilst it pleased the men selected, did not promise any hope of a more equitable distribution of the world's goods. Long and bitter were the fights between the section of the men's leaders who believed in reforms through the Liberal Party, and the new and vigorous section which demanded a Labour Party on working-class lines and owning no allegiance to either of the orthodox political parties. In the teeth of bitter opposition the franchise had been secured. Braver men had been hanged and others transported in order to secure the vote, and this sacrifice was all to be vain if the workers could only vote for the type of candidate who had withheld the vote for so long as they dared.

In these volumes can be read in detail the struggles and the disappointments which fell to the lot of the pioneers of those early days ; and they also tell in detail the history of the various movements each striving in its own way to give expression to the aims of the common people, and their attempts to fight tyranny and oppression.

To me, however, the greatest event, and the one which has indelibly left its mark on the pages of British political

history was the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893. Within itself it had peculiarly adopted all the essential features of all previous reform movements. It gave expression to the ideals of the reformer yearning for liberty and freedom, and in its fearless, passionate denunciation of all forms of tyranny it appealed to the section of idealists who hate wrong wherever it raises its head. But in addition to its love of spiritual freedom, and its hatred of tyranny and oppression it had gone to the root of the disease in our economic system. It recognised that land and capital being the possession of a few the vast bulk of the population were entirely dependent on the goodwill of the few. The remedy, therefore, was that all the people through the State should own and control all the means of life in the interests of the whole nation—in other words, Socialism.

From that small group of men has grown the great National Labour Party, and as there is a tendency at times to lose sight of the historic mission of the party the words of its founder, the late Keir Hardie, are worth quoting. Speaking at Manchester in 1894, the year following the founding of the party, Hardie said: “It is perfectly evident that some new and strong force is necessary to unite the democracy against oppression, against privilege, against monopoly ; and there is no force so powerful for this purpose as the force of Socialism which promises to bring about economically the same freedom we are supposed to enjoy politically and religiously. I believe the I.L.P. has a great opportunity if, only discarding all minor issues, it remembers it is created for the purpose of realising Socialism—that that is the one item of its programme, and that the means by which it is proposed to realise Socialism is the creation of an Independent Labour Party in the House of Commons and in every representative institution.”

In the mind of Keir Hardie at any rate the idea of a Labour Party was to realise Socialism. It is equally clear that the other parties would not give social justice, and that “some new and strong force was necessary.” The new and strong force is the Labour Party. Granted the need for a Labour Party, there seemed no question at all that the party must of necessity be a working-class party. From the very nature of its birth and the deciding factors by which it was conceived it could not be other than a class party. It was born for the express purpose of giving expression to the growing aspirations of that section of the community which owned

no property and owned nothing whatever but its labour power. If the working-class had been content to trust its destinies always to another class no Labour Party ever would or could have been formed. Since the passing of the Franchise Acts it had voted steadily and consistently for candidates drawn from the other classes of society. At one election it voted for the class representing the autocracy and the landed gentry, the next election it would vote for the class representing the owners of industrial capital and the big commercial interests. Each time it voted there is no doubt at all that its votes were cast in the hope that either of the parties would do something to ease the lot of the workers generally. Each time it was disappointed. Nevertheless the desire for social betterment was there, and has steadily grown. Because of this growing desire the thinking section of the workers began to look around for reasons as to why they always were disappointed and to find new methods. They found that the class who would not give them a square deal in the industrial field could hardly be expected to give them a square deal in the political field.

I can well remember a simple argument used by those early propagandists in trying to convince miners that their only hope of salvation lay in the formation of a working-class political party. These pioneers said to us, "You have so little faith in your employer that you will not trust him to weigh a tub of coal and return the exact amount it weighs. So little do you trust him that you pay so much per week to a man of your own choice to see that the weight in the tub is correctly registered; yet you are prepared to return this same employer or his nominee to represent your interests in Parliament." That was a telling appeal, delivered purely on class grounds. It was argued and rightly that there was no need that men, women, and children should be compelled to live on or under the poverty line, in a land of plenty. The men they sent to Parliament had received all the benefits of a good education, their intelligence had been allowed to develop, and if they had failed to give social justice to the workers it was more through lack of will than lack of opportunity.

The Labour Party, therefore, was formed purely on a class basis, and nothing that has happened since its formation provides a sufficient reason for altering the nature of its appeal.

In saying this I am not unmindful of the number of men and women not of the working-class who have given yeoman service to the cause of the workers. To me, however, their actions merely prove the contention that if social change is to come it will only be through a party organised on Labour Party lines. Those men and women who assisted in the formation of the Movement and those who have joined us since are undoubtedly idealists ; they desired social change and saw the inequalities of the present social system. But they also knew their class, and knowing their class they felt that the social changes which they desired would not come from the parties composed of the class to which they belonged. Had they believed those social changes would come in that way, obviously they would have remained in the parties where their social friendships would not have conflicted with their political ideals. The fact that they were compelled to leave their social circle in order to give expression to their political ideals is proof that each class expresses totally different ideas.

If further proof were needed that as a class the well-to-do are against the aspirations of the workers one only needs to look at the political field. In the whole of Britain you could not find a Labour member returned except in those Divisions where the manual worker is in a clear majority. Even in those Divisions where Labour candidates are put up whose public records on ability or intelligence outweigh those of his opponents you will find that people in comfortable circumstances prefer a mediocre Tory to a brilliant Labour man.

It would appear, then, that whilst we ourselves are frequently discussing as to whether we are a class party, the other side without any discussion at all go forward to all elections voting simply on the grounds of class, and for an order of things that will preserve all their class privileges. Those of us who believe in maintaining the Labour Party as a working-class party are at any rate carrying out the historic mission of the Labour Party by trying to "realise Socialism through an Independent Labour Party."

The method of realising Socialism has probably caused more discussion and dissension in working-class ranks than any other question. Every National or International Conference since the inception of the Socialist Movement has discussed the question in one form or other. At the first meeting of the International, Malatesta the Italian anarchist wished the Movement to adopt the Anarchist method, and after

many heated debates he was expelled from the Conference. Revolutionary Socialists have debated the question time and again with evolutionary Socialists in this country, whilst every country in Europe has seen bitter quarrels between Marxists and Revisionists. Much of this discussion arose from the fact that each side became wedded to its own particular set of phrases, just as Christian sects fought and quarrelled over the strict interpretation of certain religious texts. The strange thing about it is that the less there was to quarrel about the more bitter became the quarrel. It was alleged against Marx that because he had interpreted Socialist thought in the terms of cash and on economic formula, he had crushed all idealism from the Movement.

All human merits and progress, it was said, were due to the intellectual and moral desire for a better order of things, and the Marxian theory that these things were due to certain economic causes would inevitably kill all the beauty and idealism in Socialism. Personally, without being a hide-bound Marxian, I have never been able to understand why a scientist who carefully points out why things are ugly should be suspected of trying to destroy whatever beauty existed.

To me it seems that the ideal of Marx was to emancipate the common people from the exploitation of those who owned the means of life. He argued that in every stage the owning class exploited those who were compelled to work for wages, and the motive of the clashings was not spiritual or moral but economic. He suggested as a remedy that the "workers of the world should unite" to strike the economic fetters from their limbs in order to attain to a condition of freedom. There seems nothing unbeautiful in this, nor anything antagonistic to the ideals of those who have dreamed of a better system of society. I may wish to cultivate beautiful flowers in my garden, but if some factor in the soil prevents the growth of those flowers I surely have no quarrel with the man who points out to me the defects in the soil.

Looking back over the history of the early days of the Movement it would appear that most of the differences arose from too much theorising and too little actual contact with working-class problems. Differences as to method exist in the Movement to-day, but they are much more clearly defined. There are three distinct schools of thought. There is one which believes in the overthrow of the Capitalist system by some form of violent revolt. There is one which believes in

capturing the imagination of the people by advocating certain measures of Social Reform, and in this way getting the votes of the working and lower middle class. The third school believes that as most poverty is preventible, and is due to the inequalities inherent in the Capitalist system, the proper course is to advocate a clear-cut Socialist policy. They believe that measures of Social Reform leave the problem untouched, and contend that the voters must be made to understand that the very fact of one section owning all the means of life gives them unlimited power and that the only solution is to remove the means of life from private hands and own and operate them through the State for the whole nation. That briefly is the position at the moment.

If we take the first group it will be found that they belong to the Communist Party, and in numbers at least are almost negligible. This group openly advocates the seizure of political and economic power by armed revolution. We need not discuss the rights or the wrongs of the case, but one or two points naturally arise as to the feasibility of such a proposal. An insurrection without the mass of the people behind it would almost inevitably lead to a conflict between the revolutionaries, badly armed and undisciplined, and the well-armed and disciplined forces of the Crown. If the mass of the people were ready for insurrection it is conceivable that so also might the army be ready. Meantime there is nothing whatever to indicate it, and I should be very doubtful as to my ability to convince a man to take up a rifle for his class if I had failed to persuade him to take up a pencil and vote Labour. I cannot believe that the 11,000,000 people who have just voted Liberal and Tory are quite ready to take up rifles and shoot the men they have just elected. In addition to the fact that it is very undemocratic I think it is also hopeless and stupid. It is argued, of course, that in the event of Labour being returned to power a Fascist Army will at once be organised to resist our legislation. Well, we shall see. Then the majority of the people will favour Labour's policy. Besides, whichever party is in power controls the Army and Navy.

The second school of thought and a much more influential one is traditionally Conservative in outlook. Whilst it accepts the Constitution of the party which declares that the social ownership of the means of production can be the only solution of the poverty problem it hesitates to make Socialism the

issue in its electoral fights. It still prefers to fight on various schemes of social reform, whilst at the same time its opponents fight it as a purely Socialist Party. The result is that the electorate is deluged with speeches and literature misrepresenting the Socialist position.

During the last few years the electors themselves are dividing the issue as Socialism *v.* Individualism. Every newspaper they read is dinging this into their ears day after day and week after week. They must, therefore, make up their minds on their knowledge of Socialism and vote accordingly. So long as we talk of Social Reforms and keep Socialist doctrine for Conference discussions, it is obvious that the people will vote against Socialism, because their ideas on the question are confined to what the anti-Socialist says on it.

Apart from the mere vote-catching side of the question, Socialist doctrine is either right or it is wrong. From experience we have seen that the very best measure of Social Reform can be made worthless by the power of the Capitalist to take with one hand that given with the other.

We saw Mr. Snowden's magnificent attempt to reduce the cost of living to the workers destroyed almost within a week of its passing. The reduction in the price of tea, sugar, and cocoa was at once added to the price of bacon, bread, and other necessities of life. Similarly almost every increase in purchasing power is followed by an increased demand for goods, and as a consequence prices invariably tend to increase, leaving the worker where he was before. If we believe that Socialism is the only remedy obviously we ought to stop preaching something that is not a remedy and instead concentrate on the thing we believe to be a remedy. If Socialism is not believed to be a remedy then we ought to have the courage to say so.

It is argued that the people are not ready for a bold constructive Socialist policy. But when will they be ready for Socialism if they are never to be told what it is ? It is perfectly true that the Independent Labour Party and other Socialist organisations carry on a definite Socialist propaganda. This, however, does not meet the case, as thousands of people only take an interest in political and economic questions whilst an election is on. Between elections they read none of our literature and attend none of our meetings. They hear speeches and read literature during elections which in most

cases are a deliberate misrepresentation of Socialist aims and doctrines. The third school of thought believes that if Socialist doctrine is to be translated into the thoughts and lives of the mass of the people, the time has come when nothing but a bold constructive Socialist programme should be the basis of all the activities of the Labour Movement. They believe that most of the poverty in the world is due to the operations of the Capitalist system. They see that nature supplies all the wants of man in abundance. Underfed children in all countries are not underfed because of famine or natural scarcity. Everything that man needs is here now, and the one great problem for the social reformer is to see that he gets it. Grinding poverty in most cases can be traced to the periodic depressions in trade, and if any proposed measure of social reform can remove this it will be welcomed by the school of thought which demands a bold Socialist policy. If we analyse Capitalism as it is with its chaotic methods of production, manufacturing goods with no scientific data as to how much will be consumed, its consequent periods of boom and depression, its unemployment and its corollary poverty, I can think of no social reform yet proposed that touches even the fringe of the problem. In addition to its inability to produce and distribute goods in proportion to world needs, the third school contend that Capitalism and production for profits panders to the very worst that is in human nature. It creates a large body of shareholders with no interest in the product created, or in the men engaged in production. It is interested only in getting the largest possible return for its money. It cares little for the quality of the goods produced so long as they are profitable, and as a result the State is compelled to keep a large body of inspectors to ensure that the food we eat and the milk our children drink is not deliberately contaminated. Under private enterprise there seems no safeguard for the lives of the workers and so we oppose it. We believe that with nature supplying raw materials in abundance, with modern machinery and knowledge and labour power, industry could be organised to give a full and free life for all. We believe that the method of doing this is by the system of public ownership called Socialism. It is because we believe that Socialism alone can do this that we believe in preaching Socialism rather than in preaching schemes of social reform which we know will not cure the evil. Because the third group believes in a complete change in the social

system it has become fashionable to denounce them as being in favour of securing our ends by methods of violence. In point of fact no group has been more bitterly assailed by the Communists than the group who advocate Socialism.

Personally I cannot see that any more violence is needed to advocate the abolition of poverty than to advocate some scheme that is tended to mitigate that poverty, nor is more violence needed to assume control of the mines and railways than there was to secure control of the Post Office. We are perfectly certain that our aspirations can be realised by an educational campaign to convince the workers that Socialism is a better system than Capitalism.

We are told, of course, that all progress must be slow; that since the beginning of time the hand of evolution moves at the same steady pace. This is nonsense. The last hundred years has seen more change than any previous thousand. From the time of Methuselah to the advent of steam power methods of production had scarcely changed at all. If our forbears wished to make a voyage on the day before the steam engine was invented, they were obliged to travel in the same slow method as Methuselah would have travelled. Progress in the next decade will be as fast or as slow as we like to make it. The mission of the Labour Party is perfectly clear. It is to abolish poverty from a world of plenty and to do it quickly.



ROBERT APPLEGARTH.
One of the Trade Union Junta, 1867.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF ORGANISED DEMOCRACY

Origins—Social and economic conditions—Industrial Revolution—Popular unrest—Extension of the Franchise—Chartism—Trade Union beginnings—Trades Union Congress—Labour representation discussed—Reform Act, 1867—Education Act, 1870—Labour Representation League—First Labour candidates—Labour enters Parliament—Scotland leads the way.

THE Labour Party, as we know it to-day, was born at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, on 27th February, 1900. On that day a specially convened conference decided to "establish a distinct Labour Group in Parliament," with its own Whips and its own policy. From this decision has emerged more swiftly than its promoters dared dream a party that has reached the Treasury Bench of the House of Commons in less than a quarter of a century.

But although its actual entry upon the stage as a separate entity can be thus closely dated, its real beginnings go further back. For the Labour Party is not the product of a single impulse, nor was it brought into being in a day by a conference resolution. Neither the outcrop of a conspiracy nor the offspring of a few leaders in search of notoriety, its gestatory period was in fact so agonising and slow that the wonder is that it came to birth when it did. Nevertheless, as will presently appear, its coming was not only inevitable under the pressure of events, but in keeping with the spirit of the time.

Social conditions, not men, ultimately decide political tendencies and determine political alignments. It is necessary, therefore, for a right understanding of the aims and organisation of the movement in its modern form to turn to the social and economic conditions out of which it arose.

The Labour Party is the product of the Industrial Revolution; the direct result of the changes wrought in the habits and thinking of the people during the last hundred and sixty

years. For the arrival of the age of machinery, leading as it did to the destruction of most forms of home-handicraft and domestic industry and the divorcement of the workers from the soil, created problems so vast as to be insoluble except by the application of methods completely foreign to the statecraft of the day.¹ The Labour Party is the nucleus round which the forces working for the application of fresh methods to solve national problems have cohered ; and its history is simply the story of the origin and development of these new ideas and methods, as democracy reacted to the changes that came with industrialism, or tried by various means to mitigate the rigours of the factory system. It must not be imagined that the workers realised their position in clear and exact terms or were quickly ready with a cut-and-dried remedy to meet the economic pressure that hurt so cruelly. A few—Robert Owen, for instance—quite early saw the problem, saw it whole, and visualised what they thought was the solution. But many long and painful years were to pass, many false starts made and experiments tried, before the way was to become plain and the movement crystallise into the working-class organisation and programme we know to-day.

The Industrial Revolution was responsible for the creation of two new types, who between them were to monopolise the political arena and change the whole current of political philosophy and thought. The old-time divisions between man and man melted away, and others more in keeping with the changes taking place in the balance of economic power took their place. It created, on the one side, the middle-class owner-capitalist, proprietor and controller of the machinery ; on the other, the proletarian wage-earner who owned and controlled nothing but his labour. This new orientation, of course, took time to work itself out. Only slowly did the fundamental antagonism of interest between these two powerful classes show itself in the habits and thinking of the age, complicated as it was by the existence of a still powerful landed aristocracy. But gradually, as the worker adjusted himself to the new conditions, got accustomed as it were to the clang of the machines and the never-ceasing scramble for markets that meant wealth and freedom—for the few, he began dimly to realise what had happened. He found himself in a trap from which there was no escape. In country

¹ An excellent summary of the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the Inclosure Acts will be found in chapter ii of Frank Podmore's *Life of Robert Owen*.

or town he was cut off from earning a living except as the slave of landlord or capitalist. It was not that the community found itself for the first time segregated into two camps, rich and poor, employer and employed, but that this aspect of industrialism became acute and clearly apparent against the grim background of the noisome slum.

The nineteenth century was in consequence a century of great political unrest and industrial experiment; an age rich in original thought, partly the effect of the French Revolution, but much more the result of the changes briefly indicated above, and the shifting of power from the old ruling families to the plutocratic middle-class. At its commencement not only were the wage earners outside the franchise, but the middle class as well. Apart from the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824, which was carried by stealth and without realisation of the forces thus about to be liberated,¹ the first big fight came over the emancipation of the towns, which turned out to be not so much the emancipation of the towns as the opening-up of political power to the middle class, as working men, foregathering in their Radical clubs on the morrow of the victory of the Reform Bill of 1832, discovered to their great chagrin. This is not to say that at that date working men had the temerity to aspire to a place for themselves on the floor of the House of Commons, much less dream of a political party of their own. The workers knew their station, and hardly thought it seemly at that time even to hold a public demonstration without first obtaining the countenance of an upper-class sympathiser as chairman. All they did modestly aspire to was a voice in the choice of rulers from among their "betterers." "Liberty" and "Freedom" were words much in men's thoughts and on men's lips at the time. And the workers cannot be blamed for thinking these synonymous with the vote. They saw that the middle class set the utmost value on the franchise, and argued that its value would be equally great to them. What they overlooked was the fundamental difference between their own position and that of the middle class. The latter already possessed economic power, and only required the franchise to achieve the liberty and freedom they sought. They knew what they wanted

¹ Francis Place, to whom more than any other the repeal of the Combination Laws was due, held that as a consequence Trade Unionism would tend to disappear. See *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas.

and were ready: the workers were not. The vote is, of course, essential to emancipation, but experience has proved that other things are equally necessary. Those Radical-proletarians imagined that with the lever the vote would give them, full redress of all grievances would quickly follow. They could not foresee that, even with manhood suffrage, the forces against them would be so great as to demand the building-up of a separate party in the House pledged to fight for their point of view. This in itself explains the years of agitation for the Charter (which reached its crest in 1848), and its ultimate failure.

The collapse of Chartism turned the attention of the workers from politics to an agitation of a different kind. The strike replaced the vote as a weapon with the more advanced spirits. Trade Unionism began to revive—but Trade Unionism of a different sort. Combinations by workers within a craft or industry is an ancient device, though there seems little historical ground for connecting them with the Guilds which flourished in mediæval times. That they existed in the eighteenth century as semi-secret societies the Combination Laws testify. But up to this time they had been for the most part small, struggling, local associations incapable of large or sustained effort. They were certainly not national enough to take a share as organisations in the struggle for the Charter; although plans were laid by some leaders to call a general strike of all workers in support of it. Had this come, it would have been not a strike of Trade Unionists, but of workers as workers. Apart from Robert Owen's attempt to found a Grand National Trades Union, Trade Unionism down to the middle of the century was at a low ebb.

But during the eighteen-fifties and -sixties leaders definitely turned from larger public issues and set themselves the task of organising the craft unions. Trade Unionism entered upon a new phase. Its aim became constructively defensive on behalf of its members as craftsmen, rather than truculently aggressive on behalf of the workers as a class. Fortunately leadership fell to men who, though they had no wide vision, were nevertheless honest, self-reliant and able. Many of them were men who accepted the social system as fixed, and were chiefly concerned to temper its rigours to the fustian-coated. For these, Trade Unionism had fulfilled its function if it provided sickness, old-age, and death benefits, and encouraged thrift and sobriety among members. The right to use

the strike was upheld and fought for, but its arbitrament as a weapon was discouraged. In the light of after-events it is doubtful whether the moulding of the new Unionism could have devolved into better hands. An attitude of cautious conservatism was exactly what was needed in order to give the unions time to take root, collect adequate financial reserves, and feel their way towards a constructive policy. It is to this period that we owe the foundation of the great amalgamated unions which are so familiar a feature of present-day Unionism. In engineering, shipbuilding, textile, and building, local associations were co-ordinated into large societies, national in their scope.

Towards the end of the eighteen-sixties regular meetings of affiliated Trade Unions were held, though it was not till 1871¹ that these definitely became established as a yearly congress, or representative of the whole movement by the adhesion of the "Junta" leaders. In the same year the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee (now the General Council) was appointed. The setting-up of this Committee is an important landmark in our story. It is important, not only because it focussed for the first time industrial Unionism in a single body entitled (within, at that time, rather narrow limits) to act and speak for all, but because it is an indication that leaders were feeling their way back to political action as a weapon of offence and defence. For one of the functions of the Parliamentary Committee was to watch legislation affecting the movement, depose Ministers in order to press the claims of the workers, and "lobby" sympathetic members in support of Bills before the House.²

Whilst the Trade Unions were thus approaching a national understanding, events were moving more swiftly outside. In the previous decade the London Trades Council had been formed, and the London Working Men's Association had come into existence. These were definitely political in outlook and tendency and were, with kindred bodies in other parts of the country, fast educating the workers to the idea of direct working-class representation. The Trade Unions, as trade unions, had up to the setting-up of Congress held aloof from

¹ The Trades Union Congress traces its history back in a continuous line to 1868.

² For the history of the rise and growth of Trade Unions the reader is referred to Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, which is the standard work on the subject. Only such salient factors as are necessary for perspective or to indicate the forces at work towards political ends are touched on here.

these movements, though some of the more advanced leaders were prominently identified with them. But ideas so closely affecting it could not be kept from discussion on the floor of Congress, and we are not surprised to find that papers were read on the subject of working-class representation at its first meeting.

In 1869 these outside bodies, with help from middle-class sympathisers, formed the Labour Representation League to—

“Promote throughout the Kingdom the registration of working-men’s votes without reference to their opinions or party bias ; its aim being to organise fully the strength of the operative classes as an electoral power, so that, when necessary, it may be brought to bear, with effect, on any important political, social, or industrial question in the issue of which their interests are involved. Its principal duty will be to secure the return to Parliament of qualified working men : persons who, by character and ability, command the confidence of their class, and who are competent to deal satisfactorily with questions of general interest as well as those in which they are specially interested.”¹

The Congress that met in the same year supported the newly formed League and endorsed its prospectus as containing “sentiments thoroughly in accordance with the wants and wishes of working men,” and “recommended working men to obtain the return of actual working men to the Commons’ House of Parliament.” But beyond its blessing, Congress did nothing. It established no machinery to carry out its resolution ; did nothing to provide funds either to finance Labour candidatures or maintain those who might be elected. Had a suggestion to this end been incorporated in the resolution, it would have been overwhelmingly defeated.

The reference in the prospectus to working-men’s votes had been made possible by the passage of the Reform Act of 1867. This Act was the outcome of a great popular clamour, which showed itself in monster demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, and other centres. It was a measure which gave Disraeli scope both to “dish the Whigs,” and

¹ The prospectus of the Labour Representation League from which this extract is quoted is given in full in an Appendix to *A History of Labour Representation* by A. W. Humphrey.

allow free play for his undoubted democratic sentiments. Under it every householder paying rates, and having resided for one year, lodgers occupying rooms of the annual rental of £10, and in the counties all with a ratable qualification of £12, were admitted to the franchise. Before its passage only nine hundred thousand out of a total of over five millions of men in England and Wales had votes. It added over a million voters to the roll as against less than half that number proposed by Gladstone's Bill the year before. Truly, for the times, a revolutionary measure that "brought one political era to an end and introduced another. . . . Henceforth the bounds of freedom and responsibility were to be extended to include the manual working population, with whose interests much of the legislation of the next forty years was to be concerned."¹ It was followed in 1870 by the first Education Act. The Labour Representation League, therefore, began its work in times potential with great possibilities for democracy.

Congress, however, was not yet alive to the power within its grasp. Resolutions calling upon all Trade Unionists to "do all in their power to return competent working men to Parliament" were passed year by year and became hardy annuals. But nothing was done to carry the matter further. Congress seemed, like Micawber, to be waiting for something to turn up, either in the shape of payment of members or a reform of the electoral law taking election expenses from the shoulders of candidates and placing them upon the community. No other explanation of this marking-time attitude is possible, short of charging the delegates with the deliberate intention of shelving the question indefinitely. As late as 1882 an attempt was made to identify Congress still further with the movement for Labour Representation. George Shipton moved a resolution the purport of which was the establishing of a special fund "by the organised working men" with which to contest local and parliamentary elections and support any men who were elected. "Congress, however, could not tolerate this, and by 63 votes to 43 substituted a declaration in favour of the payment of members and election expenses by the State."² Payment of members was of course one of the points of the Charter, and was not enacted until many years later. At the time of which we write only one point

¹ *A Short History of the English People*, by J. R. Green.

² *A History of Labour Representation*, chap. v.

demanded in the Charter had been conceded in the Ballot Act of 1872.

But, although Congress side-tracked the movement, damning it with faint praise, the Labour Representation League was busy furthering candidatures in the country. Early in 1870 a by-election occurred at Southwark, and the League ran its first candidate in the person of George Odger, the energetic Secretary of the London Trades Council. Son of a Cornish miner and by trade a maker of ladies' shoes, Odger was at this time fifty-five years of age and at the height of his fame as an orator and organiser. He exercised enormous influence, and in parts of London working men are still to be found who remember the power he wielded over the crowds who flocked to hear him. He ran as a Radical Working Man, and although he did not succeed in winning the seat, he came within measurable distance of so doing, easily outdistancing the official Liberal, who had previously refused to withdraw in his favour.¹

This contest was not the first in which either Odger or other working-class candidates had been interested. At the General Election just before he had been put forward for one of the Chelsea seats, together with Mr. C. W. (afterwards Sir Charles) Dilke, by the Chelsea Working Men's Electoral Association. He was, however, forced to retire in favour of Sir Henry Hoare—a Liberal. For the one great difficulty, apart from finance and the apathy of the organised Trade-Union movement, which the promoters of working-class candidatures had to contend against, was the pressure which official Liberalism exerted in order to prevent working-class nominees going to the hustings. The argument then, as it is even to-day in some places, was that by splitting the "progressive" vote the Conservatives would gain the seat. Over and over again the history of this period records the withdrawal of working-men candidates on this ground and in response to Liberal appeals. But though Odger and others retired at this election, three Labour men went to the poll. These were W. R. (afterwards Sir Randall) Cremer, George Howell, and E. O. Greening. Cremer was a carpenter by occupation and worked at the bench for twenty years. He is best remembered for his sterling work in the furtherance of Peace and in the cause of Arbitration. He fought Warwick, and was bottom of the

¹ The figures were: Beresford (Tory), 4,686; Odger (Radical Working Man), 4,382; Waterlow (Liberal), 2,966.—*Recollections of a Labour Pioneer* by F. W. Souttar (who acted as Odger's election agent).

poll with 260 votes as against 863 for the Tory and 873 for the Liberal. Howell was a bricklayer, then first Secretary of the London Trades Council, and afterwards first Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress. Adopted by the working men of Aylesbury, he came out bottom of the poll, the seat being won by N. M. de Rothschild, the official Liberal. Greening contested Halifax. Here again much pressure was brought to bear in order to induce him to retire. He refused. The seat was won by the two official Liberals. All three ran under the auspices of either Radical or Liberal Working Men's Associations, as the Labour Representation League was not at that time in existence. Greening never fought again. Both Cremer and Howell remained attached to the Liberal Party until the close of their lives.

At the General Election of 1874 the League, directly or indirectly, placed about a dozen working men in the field and had the satisfaction of seeing two of them returned. These were Thomas Burt, who won Morpeth, and Alexander MacDonald, who carried Stafford. The Southwark by-election had given impetus to the activities of the League, and these victories should have heartened and increased its efforts. Its modest success apparently proved too much for it, however, for from 1874 we find its influence rapidly declining. Its extinction as an electoral force is perhaps explained by the friendlier attitude evinced at this date by the Liberal Party to working-class candidatures. No doubt the Liberals had learned something from the Southwark contest and the growing feeling among the operative classes for a few representatives of their own in Parliament. At any rate, from this time onwards we find them here and there willing to make way for approved working-men candidates—in places where these candidates were likely to beat their official selection.

In 1880 only a few working-class candidates were run. Burt and MacDonald held their seats and were joined by Henry Broadhurst, who, running with William Woodall, a Liberal manufacturer, captured one of the Stoke-on-Trent seats. At this election Joseph Arch, the founder of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, fought the Wilton division. The eighteen-eighties mark the beginnings of Liberal-Labourism. During this decade the working-class group within the Liberal Party in the House rose to eleven, one of whom—Broadhurst

—was made Under-Secretary at the Home Office. In the same period the first working-men Justices (three) were appointed.

Let us now turn to the activities of the Trades Union Congress during these years. Resolutions in favour of working-class representation in Parliament had been coming before it regularly throughout this period, but it was not until 1886, nearly twenty years after its first meeting, that a decision was taken to set up a Committee “to act in conjunction with the Parliamentary Committee, the Labour representatives in the House of Commons, and the friends of Labour Representation throughout the country.” This Committee was to be elected annually by Congress, but in actual fact the following year it separated from Congress and became an independent body under the title of the Labour Electoral Association.

This new Association was not a Labour organisation in the sense understood to-day. It was a Liberal-Radical combination which imagined itself to be the advance guard, but in reality did little more than follow in the Liberal train. To a man at this time the Labour Group in the House and the majority of the rank-and-file outside were completely under the sway of Gladstonian Liberalism. It is difficult now to comprehend fully the enormous ascendancy which Gladstone wielded over the working-class leaders of the -eighties and early -nineties. Their veneration for him was real and profound, and there is no doubt that his hold over them kept back for nearly twenty years the formation of an independent Labour Party. It is notable that, as soon as his great and overshadowing figure passed for ever from the political arena, the move towards independence became more pronounced, and the Socialist minority and the “left” wing among Trade Unionists found their work of permeation, both of Congress and of the movement, easier.

We have now reached the stage where the agitation for direct representation begins to take shape and where new theories, which later the Labour Party was to make peculiarly its own, take the field. For the eighteen-eighties saw the birth of Socialism as a distinct ideal in Great Britain in the formation of the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society; whilst in the North a new prophet had arisen, who, with a small band of kindred spirits, was blazing a trail which was to have far-reaching results on the movement for independence throughout the land. We must now turn our eyes to Scotland

and trace the progress of events there under the guidance of Keir Hardie.

It was in Scotland that the first steps were taken to bring into existence a separate and independent political organisation for the working people. The Scottish Labour Party, formed in 1888, rose out of the Mid-Lanark by-election, in which Keir Hardie stood as a Labour candidate in definite opposition to the two older parties. Only the year before, Hardie had made his first appearance on the floor of the Trades Union Congress, as delegate of a small union of Ayrshire miners. He had proclaimed the necessity of severing the trade unions from the existing political parties and forming an entirely independent party for the workers. The Mid-Lanark by-election gave him the opportunity to practise the gospel he preached. There was a momentary possibility that the Liberals in the constituency would adopt Hardie as their candidate. If they had done so, the course of political history might have been changed. At that time there was still a lingering belief, even amongst the most radical and militant of the working class leaders as well as among the Socialists, that the Liberal Party could be made the instrument of the new ideas. The action of the Liberals at the Mid-Lanark by-election satisfied Hardie and other Scottish leaders, including Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then beginning his career in London, that nothing could be done to secure Labour representation in Parliament through the Liberal Party. Accordingly Hardie stood as an avowed independent, and persisted in his candidature despite every effort made by the Liberals to persuade him to withdraw. It is stated that Hardie was offered a safe Liberal seat elsewhere, all his election expenses, and £300 a year, to abandon the position he had taken up at this by-election and to remain within the Liberal fold. His refusal brought him an apparently poor reward in the actual poll, for he obtained only 712 votes. But he had nevertheless, whether consciously or instinctively, begun his real life's work at that moment, by initiating in Scotland the movement towards an independent Labour Party.

Within two months of the by-election the Scottish Labour Party was formed, in Glasgow, in May, 1888, with Hardie as its secretary. The new party found a chairman in Mr. R. B. Cunningham Graham, then M.P. for North Lanarkshire, which seat he had won as a Liberal in 1886. His picturesque and striking personality had become familiar in the famous episode

in Trafalgar Square, where with John Burns he had vindicated the right of free speech, had been arrested, and tried at the Old Bailey. He flung himself into the propaganda of the Socialist movement which had risen in an organised form a few years earlier. The vigorous efforts of the Scottish militants to permeate the working class movement with the idea of independent political representation bore early fruit. Within five years the Scottish party, with other organisations called into existence, was able to give effect to its schemes. Hardie, elected in 1892 as member for West Ham, presided in the following year at a conference in Bradford, at which the Independent Labour Party was founded, and in which the Scottish Labour Party was merged. At the General Election of 1895 the new party was able to put no fewer than 28 candidates in the field. None, not even Hardie, secured a seat in Parliament on this occasion, a fact which showed that a great deal of work still remained to be done within the organised movement to lay the foundations of the Labour Party. It is necessary to turn in the next chapter to the trade union movement in order to trace the development of the Socialist and political Labour idea.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW UNIONISM

From Friendly Society to Fighting Union—Tests of Union policy—Change in political outlook—Concurrent tendencies—Discontent and unrest—Old Unions and new—Criticism of official leaders—Congress discussions—New methods in industrial disputes—Growth of Internationalism—Desire for political independence.

THE debacle of 1879 in the Trade-Union movement in Britain was followed by a period of complacent quietism beneath the calm surface of which went on a process of slow recovery. The trade depression was marked by an unusual number of bankruptcies in the commercial world. The City of Glasgow Bank failure ruined all but half a dozen of the Scottish Trade Unions; the National Union of Miners survived only in the north of England counties; the limitation of hours of labour as well as increases of wages were lost in all quarters. The dark days of the early eighties roused a spirit of criticism inside the movement itself which smouldered for a few years, but was within the decade to invade the Trade Union Congress and become the central subject for discussion.

The Trade Unions which had weathered the storm were dominated by the great amalgamated societies, which had been built up on the "New Model" of the Engineers, and which combined extension, sick, superannuation and other provident benefits with the more strictly "trade benefits," such as strike and unemployment pay. By 1885 the New Unionism of the fifties had become the Old Unionism, and a new spirit was demanding what was at once an extension and a limitation of Trade Unionism—an extension so that the whole field of industry, unskilled workers as well as skilled, should be included in the organisation. The younger school of leaders contended that this was impossible so long as the provision of numerous "benefits" necessitated a high weekly subscription from every member. It was obviously impossible

that the labourer earning less than a pound per week could afford anything more than a few pence per week as a union subscription. The New Unionists of the eighties wished to create a new type of union, one which would confine its activities to purely trade purposes and become a fighting organisation instead of coupling with its Trade Unionism a huge friendly-society element. It was maintained that the building up of huge reserve funds to meet all sorts of extra benefits and liabilities had become so great an obsession with the leading officials of the great amalgamated societies that they had lost sight of the primary purpose of the unions—the betterment of the conditions of work of its members. It is certainly true that the policy of the big unions was not sufficiently militant to satisfy many of their adherents. On the other hand the stability of the great unions, even in the very severe depression which enveloped the trade of the country, was largely due to the great accumulated funds of the unions themselves. Previous depressions had usually wiped out entirely even the vestiges of workmen's combinations, but on this occasion with depleted resources, both in men and money, the great national unions had weathered the storm. Indeed that which had been worst hit was the miners' organisation, which all through its history had confined itself to purely trade benefits.

Another line of division in the Trade Union ranks ran concurrently from 1885 with the dispute as to the alternative benefits of benefit club and trade society. This was the question as to the respective values of collective industrial action through a Trade Union as compared with legislative action—the use of the Trade Union forces by political action to get certain ameliorations of conditions. The topic round which the latter dispute raged for several years was the question of the eight-hour day. The older school maintained that this could best be achieved by purely Trade Union action, by agreements between the employers and the unions. Their strongest support came from the Northumberland and Durham miners, who had achieved a six-hour day by this method, and feared that the new maximum eight-hour day would also tend to become a minimum. The main argument put forward, however, was the "liberal" one that the State should not interfere with conditions regulating the hours of adults. The only law in existence at the time regulating hours was the Act put through by the efforts of Alexander Macdonald,

one of the first working-class members of Parliament, limiting the hours of boys to ten per day. The younger school of "new unionists" fought steadily to get the support of the whole Trade Union movement for the enactment of a legal eight-hour day. The disagreement on this subject was fundamental and threatened on several occasions to disrupt the whole Labour movement. Year after year debates took place in the Trades Union Congress of a most acrimonious and bitter character, until in the end the younger school won and the subject of the legal and universal eight-hour day became a test question of Trade Union policy.

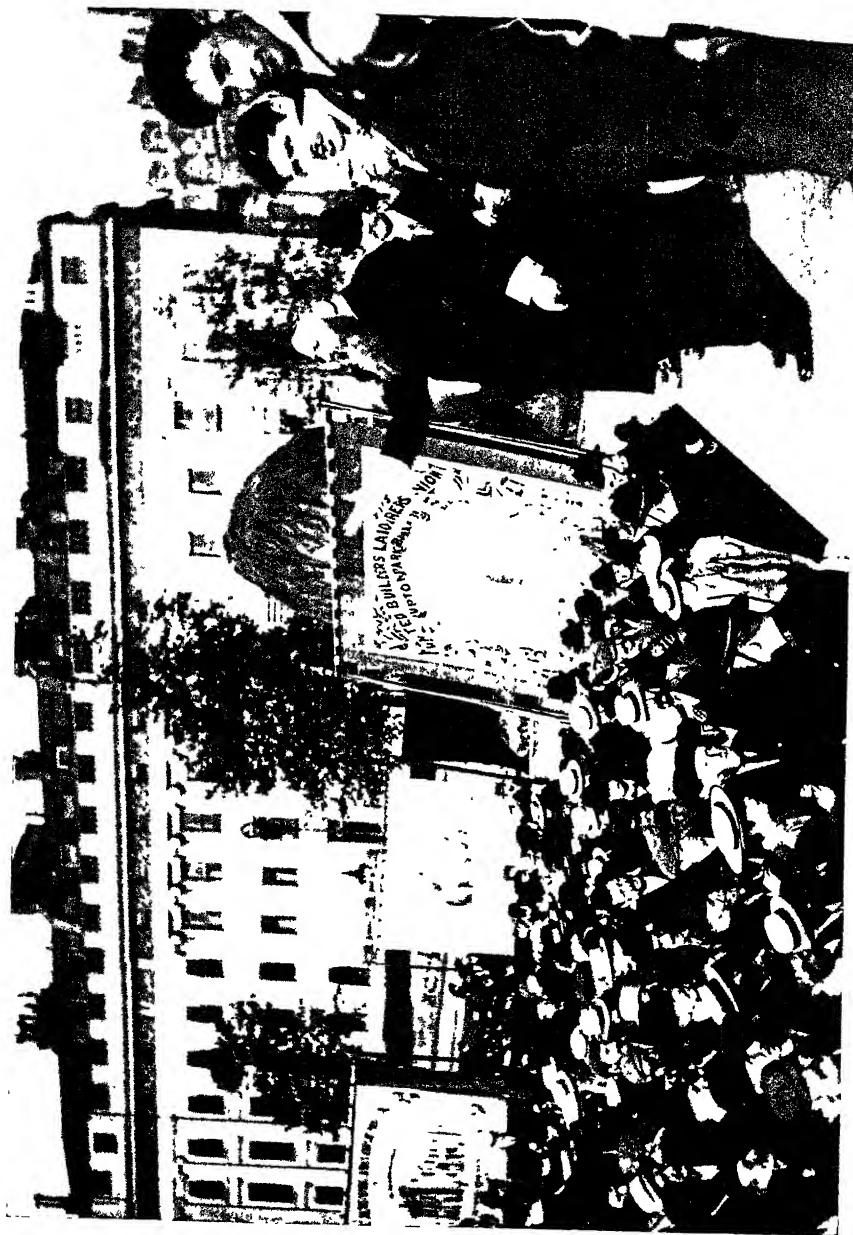
A third stream of thought was impinging on the Labour movement. The lecturing campaign of the great land reformer, Henry George, through all the great towns of Britain, along with the extensive distribution of his book *Progress and Poverty* had focussed the attention of working-class organisations on the land question, and the Trades Union Congress found year by year a growing feeling in favour of land nationalisation being included in the programme of the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress. But the ferment did not cease with land nationalisation. It was argued that all the claims put forward for the national ownership of land applied with equal force to the national ownership and control of mines, ships, and factories. Within a few years we find the general change in political outlook travelling, in Trade Union and Labour circles, from an almost complete subservience to the leaders of the Liberal Party to a demand for complete independence in Labour politics: from an individualism which would hardly allow of any deviation from the *laissez-faire* policy of the Manchester school to a belief in collective action and Socialism.

This latter change will be dealt with more fully in later chapters, but, when attempting to visualise the conditions between 1887 and 1894, it is necessary to keep in view the concurrent streams of thought both in the industrial and political fields. The leaders of the New Unionism, John Burns, Ben Tillett, Keir Hardie, were also the supporters of political action to achieve the eight-hour day, and were at the same time the leaders of the movement for a complete break with the old political parties. Ranged against them were the old leaders: Henry Broadhurst, M.P., Charles Fenwick, M.P., George Shipton and others. The battle was joined all along the line and fought with energy and resource by both sides.

The ferment of social affairs was increased by the results of a number of inquiries and investigations made partly by Royal Commissions but mainly by a group of middle-class social workers and philanthropists. "Slumming" on an extensive scale took place, and the results in such books as *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* called attention dramatically to the huge mass of poverty, sweated industries, and misery in the slums of our larger cities. The "old unionism" with its "aristocracy of labour" had no points of contact with this welter of human life and work, but two of the most successful efforts of the "new unionists," the Match Girls' Strike and the London Dockers' Strike of 1889, brought these masses for the first time within the orbit of Trade Union organisation. The greatest of these social investigations was conducted by Charles Booth, a great merchant and shipowner, who at his own expense inaugurated a systematic statistical inquiry into the actual social condition of the whole population of London. The fruits of what proved to be twenty years of patient work were published as the inquiry continued. The first two volumes of *Labour and Life of the People* were published in 1889-91, but the whole work ran in the end to the eighteen volumes of *Life and Labour in London*.

The results of the investigation reacted in all quarters. It had been expected that a cold scientific inquiry would discount if not disprove many of the gruesome tales of the "slumming" writers and the incidents quoted by the Socialist agitators. Instead it was found that the matter had been understated rather than exaggerated. The comfortable assumption dear to middle-class discussions that all poverty was due to vice or drink was shattered. Booth fixed as his standard a "Poverty Line" which made no allowance for anything but the bare necessities of life, and he was forced after the most elaborate inquiry to the conclusion that over a million and a quarter of the people of London were dragging out a miserable existence below this poverty line. In the wealthiest city in the world 32 per cent. of the population were living in a state of chronic poverty. In the East End of London the proportion rose to 60 per cent.

That this state of affairs was not peculiar to London was shown by later investigation in provincial towns and rural districts. Rowntree's *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* applied the Booth standards and methods to such a typical English town as York and found that the same proportions of dire



SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA.
Hyndman on plinth in Trafalgar Square.

poverty, comfort, and riches held for the masses and classes of York as for those of London.

The impetus to the New Unionism largely came from the more energetic members of the older unions. Tom Mann and John Burns were both members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and for several years spent their time combating the lethargy which had overcome their great Union. "How long, how long," appeals Tom Mann to his fellow-unionists, "will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your Unions? I readily grant that good work has been done in the past by the Unions; but, in Heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now? All of them have large numbers out of employment even when their particular trade is busy. None of the important societies have any policy other than that of endeavouring to keep wages from falling. The true Unionist policy of *aggression* seems entirely lost sight of: in fact, the average Unionist of to-day (1886) is a man with a fossilised intellect, either hopelessly apathetic or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter."

Burns, the Battersea engineer, was equally outspoken. In 1887 he wrote: "Constituted as it is, Unionism carries within itself the source of its own dissolution. Their reckless assumption of the duties and responsibilities that only the State or the whole community can discharge in the nature of sick and superannuation benefits, at the instance of the middle class, is crushing out the larger unions by taxing their members to an unbearable extent. This so cripples them that the fear of being unable to discharge their friendly-society liabilities often makes them submit to encroachments by the master without protest. The result is that they have degenerated into mere middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions."

Such was the atmosphere of the beginnings of the New Unionism. It was added to by that phenomenon common to all periods of general depression—a series of mass movements. Throughout the whole of 1886 mass meetings of "the unemployed threw the West End of London into panic. A mass meeting in February led to the prosecution of four leaders of the Social Democratic Federation—Hyndman, Burns, Champion, and Williams—on a charge of sedition.

The feeling of discontent and unrest was not confined to London. Every one of the large industrial centres was feeling the effect of the persistent agitation carried on by the Socialist

leaders. In these circumstances the new ideas came to the front in the general parliament of Labour—the Trade Union Congress. The Parliamentary Committee of the Congress in their annual report a few years earlier (1884), when dealing with the question of an International Conference of Trade Unions, had complacently stated that “the position they assumed was that they were so well organised, so far ahead of foreign workmen, that little could be done until these were more on a level with the skilled workers of England.” Yet the Congress could at the best only claim to represent rather less than 10 per cent. of the wage earners of Britain. It is hardly surprising, as the Webbs remark in their *History of Trade Unionism*, that the unskilled and semi-skilled workers felt as much affinity with the House of Lords as they did with the organised trades.

But it was from sections of the 90 per cent. unorganised mass that the next great change in the labour movement was destined to come. An abortive attempt was made in 1886 by Ben Tillett to organise the London dockers. After a fruitless strike at the Tilbury Docks, his newly formed union, the Tea Operatives and General Labourers, fell away to about 300 members. The first successful stand was made by the Match Girls working in the East End match factories. The leading spirit was Mrs. Annie Besant, who in an indignant article in a little paper she edited called *The Link* (itself a product of the Trafalgar Square struggle) called public attention to the hard conditions under which the Match Girls worked. The girls themselves were roused by the article to strike, and, although they had no funds or organisation, the personal devotion and energy put into their cause by Mrs. Besant and Herbert Burrows gained a well-earned victory. Within a few days £400 was subscribed by the public, and within a fortnight the effective appeal made to public opinion forced the employers to make a number of concessions to the girls. For the first time in recent years a victory had been gained, not by the well-organised Trade Unionists, but by the class of workers whose very weakness was a source of strength. At the same time the publicity given to the strike by the newer methods made it of great importance to the movement. The Match Girls’ victory marks a turning-point in the history of the working-class movement.

The following summer was spent by Mann, Tillett, Burns, and Will Thorne—the last a gasworker himself—in organising

the gas stokers in the London district. The gasworkers worked a twelve-hour day, and in August 1889 the new Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union put forward a demand for the reorganisation of the industry in three shifts of workers instead of two. The reduction in hours from twelve to eight per day was conceded by the three London gas companies and was accompanied by a slight increase in the daily wage. There was no actual stoppage of work. The advantage thus obtained has been retained by gasworkers all over the country with the exception of the South Metropolitan Gas Company, which in December 1889 after a strike insisted on a return to the twelve hours' shift. The men working under this company had entered upon a "profit-sharing co-partnership" scheme which deprived the men of the power of collective bargaining. Similar "co-partnership" proposals have been put forward on many occasions since, usually with the same object of destroying the bargaining power of the workman.

In a new atmosphere of success Tillett returned to the task of organising the London Dockers. Within a few days, on 12th August, 1889, a minor dispute arose during the handling of a cargo at the South-West India Dock. The original claim of the men for a bonus over and above 5d. an hour developed into a demand for 6d. per hour, the abolition of subcontract and piece work, 8d. per hour for overtime, and that no man should be engaged for a period less than four hours at a stretch. Tom Mann and John Burns, fresh from their triumph in the Gasworkers' dispute, came to Tillett's aid and a call was made for the whole body of dock labourers to take up the fight. Within three days ten thousand men had joined the ranks of the strikers. These were augmented by the members of the two Stevedores' Unions, embracing the better-paid workers who load ocean-going vessels. Within a week the whole port was at a standstill and remained paralysed for over four weeks. The simplicity and the fairness of the dockers' claim awakened sympathy with all sections of the public. This not only prevented the Dock Companies from organising bands of blacklegs, but led to large public subscriptions to the strikers' funds. The dramatic leadership of Burns, who daily organised huge processions of dockers—on one occasion over 120,000 participated—culminating in great meetings on Tower Hill, held the attention not only of Britain, but of the world. The most notable feature was the large subscriptions cabled from Australia. On one morning (9th September) the fund

of the Strike Committee received £1,200 from Adelaide, £500 from the Broken Hill miners, £1,000 from Brisbane, £4,000 from Melbourne, and £1,200 from Sydney. Of the total fund of £48,736 the general public at home subscribed £13,730, the British Trade Unions £4,473, while the Colonial Trade Unionists cabled £30,423. The relatively small support coming from the Trade Unions at home was due not merely to the depletion of their own funds caused by the long-continued depression, but also marked the break in sympathy between the leaders of the older unions and the lightning tactics of the new unionists.

The large funds available allowed Tillett and Burns to organise an elaborate system of strike pay without which the struggle would through sheer starvation have been lost. Over 440,000 relief tickets were issued by the Strike Committee along the riverside. The pressure of public opinion acted also by forcing the dock directors to submit to a Mansion House Conciliation Committee of which Cardinal Manning, Sydney Buxton, and the Lord Mayor were leading members. On 14th September, after four weeks' struggle, the Dock Companies agreed to the men's claims, the operation of which, however, was delayed till 4th November to allow of adjustments.

The dockers' victory gave a strong impetus to the formation of unions with low subscriptions, an aggressive policy, and strike pay as the only benefit. The older unions also felt the impulse and large accessions of members took place. A month after the strike the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Labourers' Union, as Tillett's society was now called, counted 30,000 members and spread to other parts of Britain as well as overseas. Inside twelve months 200,000 new members had been added to the ranks of the Trade Unions, and a perceptible improvement in wages and conditions was apparent. The revival spread to the country districts, and the National Union of Agricultural Labourers rose in 1890 from a scattered membership to be over 14,000 strong. The "Red Van" campaigns of the Land Restoration League helped in the work of arousing opinion in the rural areas. The National Seamen and Firemen's Union which had been founded in 1887 grew in 1889 to a membership of 65,000. "The full round orb of the Dockers' tanner" illuminated the whole labour world and brought brightness and hope to thousands among whom previous efforts to organise had been unsuccessful, or had had only fleeting results. The new unions were essentially trade-

protection societies and many of them had also a marked political bias in their aims. The two streams of thought which were impinging on the Trade Union world flowed together in the new societies. A characteristic statement of the position of the spirit is given in a resolution of the General Railway Workers' Union in 1890: "That the Union shall remain a fighting one, and shall not be encumbered with any sick or accident fund." On the other hand, in the same industry, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, which was a trade friendly society of the old type, rose in membership from 12,000 in 1888 to 30,000 in 1891. Both types of unions benefited from the revival in interest and the agitation of the new working-class leaders.

While these events were happening the fight between what was termed "the old gang" and the New Unionists was going on with increasing acrimony in the Trade Union Congress. At Bradford in 1888 a plebiscite vote on the Eight Hours question was taken, but the ballot paper was so overloaded with alternatives that no definite result was obtained. The Parliamentary Committee, the executive of the Congress, were accused of intentionally burking the issue, and on a motion of Keir Hardie the Congress itself issued specific questions afresh. An attempt to carry a demand for a legal eight-hour day in the mines and on the railways failed by 46 votes to 25. The following year at Dundee a pitched battle took place between the old and new leaders. A vote of confidence was moved in Henry Broadhurst, M.P., as secretary of the Parliamentary Committee. To this Keir Hardie moved an amendment of no confidence, and for two days a heated debate took place. The conscientious support which Broadhurst and his friends had given to the Liberal Party in Parliament and on the platform was claimed by these members as a virtue, and equally strongly denounced by their opponents as a form of treachery to the working class and at variance with the decisions of the Trade Union Congress itself. The slow change in opinion was making itself evident more quickly among the rank and file of Trade Unionists than among their leaders. The regular attenders of the Congress shared in the dissatisfaction with the action of the Parliamentary Committee; but when the vote was put on the question of the personal character and conduct of the Secretary, the Socialists were completely routed. Keir Hardie found only 11 supporters out of 188 delegates. It appeared as if the "old gang" had

won a complete victory, and that the skilled unions would break away from the new labour movement growing up around them. The result of the trades vote on the Eight Hours question added to this impression : 75,157 votes were recorded against the attainment of the eight-hour day by Parliamentary action, and only 28,489 in favour of that course. However, the Congress on the following day approved for the first time a proposal for the legal enactment of an eight-hour day for miners. On the pretext that someone else was introducing a Bill for this purpose, the Parliamentary Committee shelved the matter for the year.

Within this year the whole situation had changed, and at the Liverpool Congress in 1890 the full weight of the new school of unionists was thrown not into an unfortunate personal attack as at Dundee, but into the merits of Parliamentary action as contrasted with purely Trade Union effort in achieving an eight-hour day for all workers. The result showed a win of 193 votes to 155 in favour of Parliamentary action. Broadhurst, whose own union, the Stonemasons, had decided to support the motion, retired from the secretaryship. In the election of the new Parliamentary Committee Birtwhistle, Slatter, and Mawdsley refused to act, with the result that John Burns became a member of the real governing body of the movement. Just as the Dundee Congress marked the last triumph of the old unionists, the Liverpool one has become historic as the introduction of the new principles and new men into the official leadership of the organised workers.

For special reasons the new party gained a large contingent of support from the miners. A marked divergence of opinion had grown up inside the ranks of the mine workers. The leaders, mainly belonging to the Northumberland and Durham districts, had become converted to a belief in sliding-scale agreements by which the wages of the miner became dependent on the selling price of coal. This for many districts meant regulation of wages by the world-price for export coal, a matter over which the working miner had no vestige of control. The historic demand of the miners had been for a minimum wage irrespective of selling prices, but which would be sufficient to ensure a reasonable standard of life for the worker and his family. This difference in policy was accentuated inside the national union by the insistence of the Northumberland and Durham opposition to the legal eight-hour day for miners. As has been mentioned, this opposition

was based not on a desire to work long hours,—the coal hewers in these counties were already working only six or at most seven hours per shift—but because they thought that this short working shift would be endangered. The local custom was that the boys working the legal ten-hour day covered most of the time occupied by the double shift of the hewers. The legal eight-hour day for everyone working underground would upset this arrangement.

This particular objection developed into a full resistance to the legal regulation of adult labour. The opposition to these views came not only from the new federation in Scotland and Lancashire, but also from the old-established Yorkshire Miners' Association. In 1888 the final split came. The non-sliding scale districts called a conference in Manchester, which formed the Miners' Federation, membership of which was conditional on rejection of sliding scales, and acceptance of the policy of the minimum wage and the legal limitation of the hours of labour. The issue between the National Union and the new Federation did not long hang in the balance. The former shrank until it included only Northumberland and Durham, while the latter increased until it soon dominated the whole Trade Union world. Commencing with 36,000 members in 1888, it expanded to 96,000 in 1889, 147,000 in 1891, and was well over 200,000 in 1893. The support of this rapidly growing Federation in the Trade Union Congress from 1888 onwards marks the change of opinion with regard to the legal regulation of the hours of labour.

In 1892 John Burns and Keir Hardie were returned as members of Parliament, elected independently of the Liberal Party. In addition there were fifteen Liberal-Labour members led by Henry Broadhurst, Charles Fenwick, Thomas Burt, and John Wilson, Burt holding office under the Liberal Government as Under-Secretary to the Board of Trade. The Miners' Eight Hours Bill was introduced and passed its second reading, but was not further proceeded with. During the debate Charles Fenwick, who was secretary to the Trade Union Congress in succession to Broadhurst, both spoke and voted against the measure. The matter was raised at the Belfast Congress in 1893, and the difficulties of divided allegiance in Fenwick's case, as between the Congress decisions and the Northumberland Miners whom he represented, became more and more obvious. That Congress was not sufficiently decided in its opinions is indicated by its re-election of Fenwick as

secretary by a large majority over Hardie, but at the same time reaffirming its support of the Miners' Bill.

The parting of the ways came two years later when the Congress at Cardiff adopted new standing orders regarding the credentials of delegates. Persons who were no longer either employed at a trade or were officials of a Trade Union were ineligible to attend. As a result not only Keir Hardie, but John Burns and Broadhurst were excluded from the Congress. Under the new orders a vote on the question of an eight-hour day for all trades resulted in 625,000 favouring the proposal and 222,000 opposing it. On this "test question" the New Unionists had finally gained the victory. It remained for the first Labour Government almost thirty years later (1924) to introduce a Bill to give effect to this long-continued agitation.

The period marked by the aggressive tactics of the New Unionists saw also a development of the methods of conciliation and arbitration in the settlement of industrial disputes. It will be noted that the Dockers' Strike of 1889 was itself brought to a conclusion largely through the efforts of the self-appointed Mansion House Conciliation Committee. Later in 1898 the sixteen weeks' strike of the miners in the Midlands was concluded through the intervention of the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, who also got the miners and mineowners to agree to a system of Conciliation Boards in order to settle disputes in the future. The Royal Commission on Labour in 1894 made an elaborate inquiry into the methods of settling industrial disputes, and as a result the Conciliation Act of 1896 was passed by the Government. The first Conciliation Board in the country had been formed in 1860 in the Nottingham Frame Knitting industry. This committee, on which employers and workpeople were equally represented, was instituted mainly by the efforts of Mr. A. J. Mundella. In 1867 an Act was passed giving such joint boards power under certain conditions to enforce their findings, but, as neither side wanted to exercise such powers, the Act was still-born. Conciliation on a permanent basis is possible only when both sides to the dispute are organised. It is one of the recognised methods of collective bargaining. The body must be representative of both parties in equal numbers. It knows that the only appeal is to strike or lock-out action, and makes every attempt to reach a settlement. As a result "it meets regularly and higgles and haggles, wrangles and manœuvres, obstructs

and postpones and compromises, each side only gaining anything by winning over a moderate from the other side. Recurrent elections give each side the proper opportunity of changing their representatives and thereby modifying the spirit of the governing, arbitrating body. Both sides settle down to the habit of 'leaving it to the Board.'"¹

The Midlands Conciliation Board set up after the 1893 miners' strike superseded the sliding-scale agreements which had been abandoned by the miners in favour of a minimum wage as first charge on prices. The Board had no declared principle for determining wage rates, but actually started with both minimum and maximum limits. In this indirect way the idea of a minimum wage entered into practice, but, since it was a piece-work rate and did not imply continuous working, it was only necessarily a "living wage" when the worker was on full time. It was on the full issue of the minimum wage that the first national strike of the Miners' Federation took place in 1912, when the compromised result was embodied in an Act of Parliament.

The iron and steel trades instituted Conciliation Boards with considerable success, while joint committees were started in the cotton industries in Lancashire and to a less extent in the engineering and building trades. In the minor disputes which arose week by week the Boards settled, and thus prevented the development of smaller troubles into disputes of great magnitude. In the major and fundamental issues of industrial life both employers and workers in this country have retained the ultimate right to lock-out or strike as the case might be. A twenty weeks' strike of the Cotton Spinners in Lancashire occurred in 1893. Trade was slackening and the employers demanded a 10 per cent. reduction in wages, whereas the operatives held that the depression could best be met by placing all the mills on short time. The strike was ended by a compromise of rather less than 3 per cent. reduction accompanied by a complicated agreement for the settlement of future adjustments in wages and conditions by a system of mutual discussion. This was the famous "Brooklands Agreement" which governed the spinning industry for twelve years. In 1905 it was formally set aside by the unions on the ground that the machinery worked slowly and did not give the workers the advantage of a rising market.

The tendency to conciliation may be regarded largely as

¹ G. H. Perris, *Industrial History of England*, p. 349.

a reaction to the militancy of the New Unionists rather than as one of the characteristics of the fighting unions of the early nineties. There are, however, two remaining positive characteristics of the new movement which are worthy of notice. The first of these was the marked tendency towards intercourse and common action with foreign Trade Unionists. We have already seen that the "old gang" saw no benefit to be derived from association with the workmen of countries whose organisation was on such an inferior level as compared with their own! However, reluctantly they were forced by the decisions of the rank and file in the Trades Union Congress to convene an international meeting. At the International Conference of 1889 held in London the fight over the legal eight-hour day was fought on a wider basis. The great majority of the British delegates were against the proposal, but it was carried by the narrow majority of four votes. A notable resolution on the avoidance of war was moved by Thomas Burt, M.P., in the following terms and unanimously carried :

Seeing that the huge armaments maintained by the Governments of Europe constitute a standing menace to the peace of the world and impose terrible financial burdens upon the industrial classes, this Congress recommends the democracy to give a mandate to their representatives to substitute the principles of arbitration for war in the settlement of disputes between Governments.

The other characteristic referred to was the advocacy of the policy of appealing to the State and the municipalities to concede to their employees standard rates of wages and hours of labour. The contracts for printing for the Stationery Office were among the first to be dealt with on these lines, but after a campaign for labour representation on local authorities and on the London County Council and the London School Board, a "fair-wages" clause was included in most contracts issued by public authorities. This clause, which is still carefully treasured, ensures that the work shall be carried out under the standard wages and conditions of the district, i.e. in almost all cases the wages and conditions fixed by the respective Trade Unions. The value of the "fair-wages" clause in contracts for public bodies has had an indirect effect on the whole of industry. At first it was possible for an employer doing both private work and public work to differentiate between his workmen, keeping within the clause by giving standard wages and conditions for the making,

say, of municipal uniforms, in no way respecting these conditions for such workpeople as were employed making readymade clothes for the general market. The contrast that resulted very often in the same factory or workshop usually cured this evil, and the second groups of workpeople demanded and obtained the conditions of the fair-wage clause also. By setting up a standard which was evident not only to everyone engaged in that particular trade, but which in this way got a status in the eyes of the general public, the institution of the clause tended to make the Trade Union standard a general one in any district. Seeing the effect of its working in the end, many of the better employers engaged in general contracting work welcomed it as a guarantee and a protection against employers of the worst type.

In summing up the general effect of the New Unionism it must be kept in mind that the aggressive trade society, refusing to be burdened with friendly benefits, was not in itself a new phenomenon in the history of British Trade Unionism. In 1833 Francis Place, who, along with Hume, had fought for the Emancipation Act of 1824, was deplored the growth of trade societies. In 1851 the "New Model" for Trade Unions carried the friendly-society benefits to its greatest extent. These held the field till the middle eighties, when the New Unionism with which we have been dealing became the dominant force. It has to be noted, however, that, while this alternation of type was taking place, many trades throughout the whole period have remained constant to one or other of the types. The miners and cotton operatives have retained the trade society, while the engineers and foundry workers have equally consistently been trade friendly societies. The latter type must necessarily have a high weekly contribution, but the cotton spinners have also a high contribution for purely trade purposes. The necessity for a low subscription has caused the unskilled labourers' unions to eschew extra benefits, and the same applies to the low paid agricultural workers. We have seen that the revival of Trade Unionism in 1889 and the following years was characterised by the supremacy of the trade-society type of organisation, but that the older unions of the friendly-society type benefited by a great accession of strength directly due to the interest caused by the Dockers' Strike. In the nineties both forms continued to add to their strength and neither has supplanted the other.

A much more definite victory for the New Unionists must

be recorded in the change they wrought in the general political and social outlook of working-class organisations. From being not merely an ally of the Liberal Party but a definitely subservient section of that party, the Trade Unionists gradually broke away, and finally, with the turn of the century in 1900, set up an independent Labour Representation Committee which was within a few years to become the Labour Party. The old leaders in some cases adopted the new ideas, but in many cases dropped into the background and were replaced by new men. That change is referred to here, but will be more thoroughly dealt with in a later chapter. What can be said is that the spirit that lay behind the New Unionism and which gave it its driving force was one which widened the horizon of the Trade-Union movement, both nationally and internationally. The exclusive spirit which too often had marked the better-paid engineer, carpenter, or boilermaker gave place to a wider recognition of the solidarity of the workers as a whole. Women workers who had been rigorously excluded in many cases were assisted in the formation of unions, and an impetus was given to the formation of federations and of local Trades Councils embracing every type of Trade Union in a district. Finally, the generally broadening of the outlook was responsible for the greater interest taken in international relationships with the workers of other lands.

Much of the change that took place in the outlook of the Trade Union leaders must, however, be attributed to the influence of the Socialists, especially of those identified with the Fabian Society, and the Independent Labour Party. The rise of the Socialist Movement in this country is an integral part of the story of the Labour Movement. The two movements interacted and produced in due time the Labour Party as we know it to-day. But the Socialist Movement itself has developed divergent tendencies as the two succeeding chapters will show.

CHAPTER IV

WORK OF THE MARXIAN SOCIALISTS

Liberalism in the 80's—Hyndman as Socialist pioneer—The New Party—William Morris and others—Socialist propaganda—Divisions of opinion—Social democrats as candidates—Unemployed agitation—Bloody Sunday—Marxist Socialism too doctrinaire—Towards direct Labour representation.

THE resurgence of the Labour Movement in Great Britain, which culminated in 1924 in the formation of the first British Labour Government, assumed its present form in 1881. At this period in British political history a moment had arrived when it appeared as if Liberalism and Radicalism had fulfilled their mission. Pressing social questions, foreshadowed by Carlyle decades earlier and eloquently described and keenly analysed by Ruskin, were looming up amidst apparently boundless prosperity. John Morley, but a few years previously, had described England as being a "paradise for the wealthy, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor." But to these questions Liberalism and Radicalism had then no concrete solutions to offer. To Liberal leaders the formula "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform" was considered to be a sufficiently satisfactory reply to the few ardent spirits who ventured to demand measures for dealing with the appalling problem of poverty which was manifest in every large centre of population. But the word "reform" signified little or nothing in the way of legislation for improving the lot of the masses. Indeed, Liberalism and Conservatism were both still almost entirely under the influence of the Manchester *laissez-faire* doctrine against which Carlyle during his most brilliant phase had thundered with the full force of his powerful and scornful eloquence. State interference on an effective scale in the realm of economic and social affairs was still looked upon by both parties as tampering with "natural" conditions, and

as a policy which was bound to produce disastrous consequences to the community.

At this moment was born the Democratic Federation. Its leading spirit was Henry Myers Hyndman, son of wealthy parents, endowed with a strong personality, and possessing a wide knowledge of politics and economics and an intense dislike of modern commercialism. His upbringing and temperament gave his mind a distinctively conservative, not to say Imperialist, tinge with regard to purely political questions ; but this characteristic was combined with a strong and almost romantic sympathy with social-revolutionary ideas. A fascinating conversationalist and eloquent platform orator, an enthusiastic agitator and devoted advocate of Socialist doctrines, he failed to acquire the influence his undoubtedly capacity should have earned, owing to his undisguised contempt for what he considered to be the stupidity and docility of the masses to whom he appealed, and to his impatience with those, even among his friends, who happened to disagree with him either in opinion or policy. Nevertheless, to him are due more than to any other man the beginnings of the movement which has carried the Labour Party into office and opened a new era in British politics.

His interest in social questions brought H. M. Hyndman in contact with Karl Marx, of whose ideas he became the most noted British exponent. In 1881 he published *England for All*, intended to be the programme of a new party. It indicated thus early the trend of the author's mind in the direction of Socialism and at the same time dealt with the chief political questions of the day. It is written in a fluent and trenchant style, and bears the stamp of sincerity and earnestness. In Hyndman's circle were Professor Edward Spencer Beesley (the Positivist), Helen Taylor (the stepdaughter of John Stuart Mill), Joseph Cowen (Radical M.P.), and others who were critical of the existing state of society. In June 1881 a conference was held at which the Democratic Federation was formed. Attempts were made, but without success, to bring in the London Radical working men's clubs, then showing the signs of the political decay into which they have once completely fallen. Here and there among the clubs were to be found old grey-haired men, survivors of the army of Chartism, who lingered on into the nineties discoursing, when occasion offered, of the teachings of Bronterre O'Brien, and of events in the life of Feargus O'Connor. These veterans of

the last great English working-class political movement were practically the only type of Radical who became interested in the new endeavour to take up the task of organising a great popular movement in continuance of the "great work of Spence and Owen, Stephens and Oastler, O'Connor and O'Brien, Ernest Jones and George J. Harney."

In spite of the negligible amount of support given to his efforts, Hyndman, with the optimism for which he was noted until the day of his death in 1922 (it often seemed as if, to him, the Social Revolution was waiting just round the corner), laboured assiduously to get the new organisation on to its feet and to make it march. The programme of the Federation contained nine points : (1) Universal suffrage ; (2) Triennial Parliaments ; (3) Equal electoral divisions ; (4) Payment of members ; (5) Corruption and bribery of the electors to be punishable as criminal offences ; (6) Abolition of the House of Lords as a legislative body ; (7) Home Rule for Ireland ; (8) Self-government for the Colonies and the Dependencies ; (9) Nationalisation of the land. It is noteworthy that the only actual Socialist demand among these nine points was the last. Its inclusion was probably due to the interest which Henry George's book, *Progress and Poverty*, and his agitation in favour of the taxation of land values, had aroused in the question of the land. Hyndman, however, had no belief in the efficacy of Henry George's single-tax proposals. He held that taxation of land values was a totally inadequate remedy for the social ills of the age, and opposed Henry George's views in a debate with the latter in 1884. Hence nationalisation of land appeared in the programme of the Democratic Federation, a measure advocated by Alfred Russel Wallace, but which had not attracted attention to the same extent as Henry George's proposal.

The Democratic Federation did not create much stir in the public mind, nor did its membership ever become very large. Still, the most prominent of the socialistically inclined writers, speakers, and thinkers of the period became attached to it. Amongst its recruits were William Morris, Ernest Belfort Bax, Eleanor Marx, John E. Williams, James MacDonald, and Harry Quelch, all of whom rendered notable service later to the avowed Socialist movement. Of these pioneers the most famous was, obviously, William Morris. He had acquired European fame as an artist-craftsman possessing great creative genius, and as a poet of high rank. His influence on

applied art not only in England, but on the Continent, especially in Germany, has been profound, although not always acknowledged. His revolt against the existing order was mainly that of the artist against ugliness, greed, and commercialism. In a sense he was conservative: the golden age for him was somewhere back in the past before the invention of the steam engine and the introduction of steam-driven machinery; when men worked on great cathedrals as craftsmen, and not in factories as "hands"; when articles were produced for use and not simply for profit, and were beautiful because they were essentially fitted for the purpose for which they were made. In this repulsion to the outcome of capitalist development he was at one with John Ruskin. But, unlike the older social critic, he did not confine himself to literary assaults upon the aspects of society which enraged and disgusted him. He left his studio and his study for the market-place in order to propound his views to the common people. He wrote propagandist poems which are still an inspiration wherever two or three workers in the cause of Labour are gathered together. But as a popular agitator he was not successful. His message was above the heads of masses, and he was not the master of the kind of eloquence which appealed then to a working-class audience. But to many men who were afterwards prominent in the Socialist and Labour movement he became, through his writings, lectures, and enthusiasm for a higher, juster, and more dignified social order, an inspiring teacher.

Ernest Belfort Bax, who is still living (1924), has a mind of a different kind. He is a philosophic and historical writer of considerable originality and strongly held individual ideas. J. L. Joynes, an Eton master and a journalist, was associated with Henry George during a lecture in Ireland. He wrote Socialist tracts and revolutionary poetry. Eleanor Marx, the daughter of Karl Marx, endowed with a keen intellect and a charming personality, was a devoted disciple of her father's doctrines. John E. Williams, an unskilled labourer, became in later years a well-known leader of the unemployed and the spokesman of unpopular causes. Henry Quelch was for many years the editor of *Justice*, the organ of the Democratic Federation. He was a dour figure; a sullen and bitter fighter on behalf of the workers, who never wavered in his faith in the inevitable approach of the Social Revolution prophesied by Marx. He was a fluent speaker, amazingly well read along certain narrow lines, and with a shade of



THE LATE HARRY ORBELL.
Leader of the London Dock Strike.

melancholy in his speech, that seemed to arise from his knowledge of the sufferings of the masses which he had shared and which he rarely allowed himself to forget. James Mac-Donald was a working tailor who on occasion could speak with surprising power, but who never reached the position in the Socialist movement which seemed marked out for him. Later he became the Secretary of the London Trades Council.

In 1883 the Democratic Federation proclaimed its Socialist faith by publishing a pamphlet entitled *Socialism made Plain*, which reached, for those days, the large circulation of about one hundred thousand copies. In this document the cause of poverty was traced to the private ownership of the means and instruments of production ; to cure this social disease it was necessary to socialise land and capital. To secure this end a new party with a new faith was necessary, and the Democratic Federation aimed at being the new party. In addition to its ultimate object, the Federation advocated the following measures : State or municipal working-class dwellings ; free education with at least one free meal for school children ; an eight hour working day ; progressive taxation on incomes of over £500 per annum ; nationalisation of banking, railways, and land ; organisation of the unemployed by the State with the provision of work ; rapid extinction of the National Debt.

Propaganda by pamphlet was soon followed by propaganda by a weekly journal. *Justice, organ of Social Democracy*, was established at the end of 1883 and has continued to the present day. Edward Carpenter, poet, philosopher, and Socialist-Communist, whose writings exercised great influence on the mentality of the early pioneers of modern British Socialism, provided the funds for the new venture. *Justice*, once described by George Jacob Holyoake, Chartist and co-operative leader, as a "furious little sheet," was kept going by the self-sacrifice of a few writers. It has remained, in spite of many vicissitudes, the leading exponent of Marxian ideas, although possibly Marx would not have always agreed with the manner in which they were expounded, nor perhaps would he have considered that his doctrines were always accurately presented. At least this was the view of Frederick Engels, for many years the close friend and fellow-worker of Marx. He lived until 1895, and was a caustic critic of the principles, policy, and methods of which *Justice* was the literary protagonist. Hyndman, who wrote constantly in its columns, was a combative personality with a rare talent for invective

—which, however, often did more harm to himself than to his opponent. He resented fiercely the criticism of Engels, whom he once described as the “Llama of Regent’s Park Road”—an allusion to the retirement in which Engels lived, and from which he only emerged at long intervals to pronounce judgment on the orthodoxy of theories which their authors claimed to be based on his old friend’s teachings.

Hyndman, from the beginning of the Federation’s activity, was its moving spirit. He loved the platform and its publicity, and revelled in scornful and sarcastic denunciation of the capitalist system, and in exuberantly optimistic prognostications of sudden and violent change. He had a great fascination for certain types of intelligent and thoughtful workmen who in after-years became prominent in the wider Labour movement, and no doubt his example and teaching gave them courage and self-confidence in the self-imposed task of expressing working-class revolt against existing conditions. But they also caught his dogmatic, intolerant, and arrogant spirit, which repelled many who might have been won over to the Socialist cause. But in spite of this failing, which was serious in the leader of an attempt to found a party that should represent the new forces which during the greater part of the nineteenth century had failed to find coherent and permanently organised expression, the debt that the Labour Party owes to Hyndman is difficult to overestimate. The propaganda he and his converts carried on in the most discouraging circumstances, destructive only though it may in the main have been, was a powerful solvent which acted upon the apathy of the masses in the eighties as acid affects the rust upon metal. The pioneer work of Hyndman and his friends made it possible for the more constructive appeal of other and later Socialist and Labour organisations and agitators to obtain hearing and response.

William Morris was at this time equally devoted in his service to the Federation. He provided funds, spoke at street-corner meetings, lectured in the parks and in working-men’s clubs, and sold *Justice* and other Socialist publications at open-air gatherings, with the same ardour with which he wrote his poetry and romances or exercised his skill as the most gifted artist-craftsman of the nineteenth century. The atmosphere of 1848 was prevalent in the early proceedings of the Federation. It was thought that Socialism would only be achieved by physical force, and Morris was prepared to take

his share in the fighting that was to be the prelude to the new era.

In 1884 the Democratic Federation at its fourth annual conference decided to change its name. It became the Social Democratic Federation, and thereby expressed openly in its title the object for which it had actually been working from the day of its foundation. It is, however, not the oldest avowed Socialist organisation in Great Britain. This rank is rightly claimed by the Fabian Society, which was formed in November 1883.

The Social Democratic Federation could now count upon the support of other personalities, who became well known as Socialist missionaries. Among these were H. H. Champion, Herbert Burrows, Walter Crane, Hunter Watts, Andreas Scheu, and John Burns.

H. H. Champion, ex-officer of the Army, was an exceedingly able writer and the wielder of a caustic pen. He had, however, the temperament of an aristocrat and an inborn sympathy with Conservative traditions, both of which prevented him from really understanding and sympathising with the minds of the masses whom he endeavoured to lead. Herbert Burrows was of a different type. An excellent speaker, he could sway audiences by appeals to sentiment and by his obvious sincerity. Walter Crane, the well-known artist, whose Socialist and Labour cartoons and drawings are prized by the Labour movement as valued possessions, approached Socialism from the same angle as his more famous friend, Morris. His adherence to the Socialist cause was a great asset, although he was not successful on the platform. Hunter Watts rendered good service as a propagandist, although he never reached the front rank as a leader. Andreas Scheu was an Austrian by birth who was prominent in Socialist circles for a short time only. John Burns, an arresting figure, black-bearded, thick-set, powerful in physique, endowed with a magnificent voice and dynamic energy, was already showing promise of becoming the greatest popular open-air orator of the last fifty years.

These additions to the fighting strength of the new movement should have resulted in a rapid growth in the membership and influence of the newly baptised Social Democratic Federation. Unfortunately, however, at this moment dissensions among the leaders, which for some time had been smouldering, now developed into open disruption. In December

1884 the Federation split into two camps : Morris, Crane, Bax, Eleanor Marx, Scheu, with a number of followers, left the Federation and formed the Socialist League ; Hyndman, Champion, Joynes, Burns, Hunter Watts, Quelch, H. W. Lee, Williams, Burrows, with their adherents, remained to carry on the activities of the Social Democratic Federation.

To speculate at length upon the causes of this disruption would now serve no useful purpose. No doubt the personal factor played a considerable part in bringing it about. Hyndman's spirit was certainly autocratic, and he and Morris were sufficiently alike in this regard to generate friction. But the composition of the Federation from the beginning was fissiparous. It comprised parliamentarians and anti-parliamentarians, revolutionary socialists and social reformers, communists of various schools, and even extreme anarchists. Unity had not been maintained by any considerable measure of success. The hope that the Radical workmen's clubs would join the Federation had not been realised ; crowds who listened at street corners and in the parks appeared to be satisfied with the exercise of curiosity ; they did not bear out Hyndman's boast that "the millions were marching behind the Federation," or, if they were, it was not as the rank and file of an organised army acknowledging the leadership of the Federation. The disappointment engendered by this apparent failure naturally led to bickerings and quarrels with regard to policy and methods. Differences of temperament and opinions became evident, and as the leading actors in this drama of disillusionment were individuals with strong personalities, divisions were bound to arise. It was no new experience. Many movements composed of enthusiastic, strong-willed, and originally minded men have followed the same process and have suffered in the same way in their early days from what the Germans graphically describe as *Kinderkrankheiten* (diseases of childhood).

The Socialist League lived only a few years. Its main-stay was William Morris, who, with a remarkable patience for a man with the sensitive temperament of an artist, suffered the stupidities and ineptitudes committed by his working-class colleagues. The organ of the League was the *Commonweal*, to which Morris and Bax contributed regularly. In addition Morris made good the permanent deficit with which the paper, in spite of the brilliance and fame of its chief writer, was afflicted. The membership of the League never exceeded

a few hundred, and this tiny band of more or less cantankerous idealists had no common bond either in opinion or policy. Some were against any support being given to measures of social reform. Their motto was "All or nothing." Some favoured political and parliamentary action; others, again, were for purely revolutionary propaganda. There were also among them a compact little band of anarchists who ultimately succeeded in driving Morris out of the League. He had been taught a useful lesson by his companionship with the variegated and contentious elements which surrounded him. He came to the conclusion that a physical-force policy was foolish and impossible. At the same time he remained firm in the belief that it was the duty of Socialists to refrain from attempting to reform society, and to confine themselves to preaching Socialism. In a dignified letter written in November 1890 he explained his attitude and withdrew from the League, which soon afterwards came to an inglorious end as a purely anarchist body.

Morris retained his interest in Socialism to the end of his busy life. At his residence, Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, a group of men and women formed the Hammersmith Socialist Society, at which prominent spirits of the movement forgathered periodically and where Morris delivered occasional lectures.

William Morris is one of the great figures of the Labour and Socialist movement. His inspiration remains potent in spite of the fact that he had no interest in politics, which are the chief concern of the Labour Party. He was a rebel against the capitalist system, because under it there could be no art and no happiness in work for the great majority; and to him, work without joy and life without art meant an existence devoid of meaning. His message to his age has been kept alive in the writings of the Guild Socialists and in the literary works of such men as G. D. H. Cole and Clutton Brock. *The Dream of John Ball* gives the truest idea of the form of society to which he aspired. It is a Utopia widely different from those imagined by other modern creators of ideal commonwealths. It is in the direct line of descent from the imaginary kingdom of Sir Thomas More, to whom, indeed, Morris bore some resemblance in character and spirit.

The Social Democratic Federation, shorn of some of its most active men and women, now became more definitely in favour of parliamentary action. The General Election of

1885 was approaching, and Hyndman and Champion thought the time had come for the Federation to put candidates into the field against those of the historic parties. But elections were costly, and the finances of the Federation were merely proportionate to its numerical strength. Funds were, however, found for three candidates : John Burns stood for Nottingham, John E. Williams for Hampstead, and John Fielding for Kennington. Burns made a big fight and his poll was, for those days, not unsatisfactory, for he obtained 598 votes. But the other two contests were complete fiascos : Williams received 27 votes and Fielding 32.

The decision to take part in the two London contests was a deplorable blunder. Prior to the elections, the Social Democratic Federation appeared in the eyes of the public to represent, if not Hyndman's boasted "millions," at least a considerable number of thousands of London's great disinherited. Moreover, the money for the election expenses of Williams and Fielding had been provided from Tory sources. Now, it is true that there is no difference between Tory and Liberal gold, provided it is given without conditions as to its use, and there was no reason to regard the Tory Party of that day as being more hostile to Socialism than the Liberal Party. But the London Radicals, to whom the Federation mainly looked for ultimate support, were shocked. To them the acceptance of Tory money was the unpardonable political sin. This incident, coupled with the absurdly small vote given to Williams and Fielding which proved that the Federation had no electoral influence, nearly put an end to the organisation. Its membership declined, its subscriptions decreased, and the Press gave little attention to what had hitherto been considered to be a formidable revolutionary force. Although partial recovery was achieved, the mistake of 1885 gave the Federation a reputation for doubtful political morality which it never quite succeeded in living down.

The years 1886 to 1887 were marked by great distress among the workers. Unemployment was rife, and the crowds of workless men gave the Social Democratic Federation an opportunity to rehabilitate itself, of which for a time it took full advantage. The unemployed were marshalled in loose order and marched by Federation leaders to fashionable churches on Sundays, and on weekdays to the Local Government Board and to Boards of Guardians. In the large provincial towns, such as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham,

and Leicester, similar methods were adopted to bring the question of unemployment prominently to the notice of the Government and of the public. In the metropolis open-air meetings were addressed by Champion, Hyndman, and others, at which speeches of a frankly revolutionary character were made. The climax of this agitation was the famous Trafalgar Square riots of 1886.

The Federation was not the only body which concerned itself with the unemployed. Protective theories, although, according to Disraeli, they are "not only dead but damned," have the habit of making ghostly reappearances during times of bad trade. This was the case in 1886. Disguising their tenets under the name of Fair Trade, Protectionist agitators competed with Socialist orators for the attention of the crowds of workless men and endeavoured to persuade them that the real cause of their condition was free trade and not capitalism. On 8th February, 1886, a Protectionist gathering was held in Trafalgar Square with the object of protesting against the sugar bounties. The Social Democratic leaders organised a counter-demonstration, and it appeared that proceedings were likely to become lively and to lead to a serious breach of the peace. The police were nervous, and to prevent trouble John Burns led the demonstration through Pall Mall with the intention of continuing the meeting in the less restricted space of Hyde Park. Hyndman, Champion, and Williams marched with Burns at the head of the crowd, which began its progress through clubland. The windows of the clubs were filled with spectators, who were, to the marchers, the rich men who were the cause of their misery. What followed has been described crisply by Bernard Shaw. "The rich men crowded to the windows to see the poor men pass along; and Dives, not noticing the absence of the police, mocked Lazarus. Lazarus thereupon broke Dives's windows, and even looted a shop or two, besides harmlessly stoning the carriage of a tactless lady at the Achilles statue." Hyndman, Burns, Champion, and Williams were arrested and tried for this affair; but all four were acquitted. Naturally the occasion was used by the accused to make Socialist propaganda speeches in the dock; and Burns especially made an oration which added to his fame among the workers. One of the results of the riot was that the Mansion House Fund for the relief of distress went up suddenly from £30,000 to £79,000.

For some months the agitation went on with increasing

vigour ; but then occurred another of the frequent disagreements between the Federation leaders. Champion retired from active service because his unemployed policy was not adopted ; Burns withdrew owing to dissension with Hyndman. The unemployed, left leaderless, made Trafalgar Square their constant meeting-place, where they listened to violent harangues which at times bore resemblance to the incitements of the *agent-provocateur*. Alleged fear of further disorder brought about the prohibition of further meetings in Trafalgar Square. This aroused not only the Social Democrats, but also the remnant of London Radicalism, and it was decided that a great demonstration should be held in the Square on Sunday, November 13th, 1887. Steps were taken to obtain permission for the holding of the meeting from the Home Secretary, and a deputation, headed by Cunningham Graham, then a Radical member of Parliament holding advanced views, visited the Home Office for this purpose. But neither the arguments of the deputation nor the attractive, picturesque personality of Graham had the desired effect upon the Minister. The Square remained closed to public gatherings. The only thing left to do was to imitate the Hyde Park affair of 1866, when the park railings were pulled down, in order to vindicate the right of free speech and to defy the Government. Elaborate military and police preparations were made to meet the advertised advance on the Square, and when the various contingents of demonstrators approached they were repulsed without mercy. A number of persons were wounded, and Burns and Cunningham Graham, who made a vigorous effort to force their way through the police barrier, were roughly handled and then arrested. In the annals of the Socialist movement 13th November, 1887, is known as Bloody Sunday. Three months later another but less serious attempt was made to rush the Square, which resulted in the death of a workman named Sinnell, at whose imposing funeral William Morris and Quelch made orations. Burns and Graham were tried at the Old Bailey and were sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. It is of interest to record that their counsel was Mr. H. H. Asquith, afterwards Prime Minister, and that John Burns was his colleague in the Cabinet of the Liberal Government from 1906 to 1914.

These stirring incidents mark the close of a distinct phase in the history of the modern Labour and Socialist movement. "Insurrectionism," wrote Bernard Shaw in 1892, "after a

two years' innings, has vanished from the field and has not since been heard of." During these two years the turmoil and excitement which arose from the economic stagnation from which not only Great Britain, but most industrial countries suffered, was considered by some of the Socialist leaders to be the premonitory signs of the break-up of Capitalism and the approach of the long-expected Social Revolution. But the revival of trade, which began in 1887, and the consequent decline in the number of the unemployed, proved that this optimistic view was an illusion. It was now clear to realists such as Champion that the age in which revolutions could be made by riots, street fighting, and the manning of barricades was gone by. He left the Social Democratic Federation and founded the *Labour Elector* and worked for the creation of an independent Labour Party. He was a skilled writer with a pungent style, but although his journal reached at one time a quite respectable circulation, his conservative leanings prevented his ideas from gaining the influence they merited.

From 1887 the Labour and Socialist movement began to extend in several directions which will be described later. The pioneer work of the early eighties was beginning to show definite results in a growing, if still vague, demand for direct Labour representation in Parliament and on local governing bodies. This demand the Social Democratic Federation failed to embody completely, and it was left to other organisations to give it concrete expression. The Federation remained too doctrinaire and intolerant to attract the practical and good-natured British worker. Discussions on the Marxian theory of value, the importance or otherwise of palliative measures, and other abstract questions were to him a weariness to the flesh. The attitude of the Social Democratic critics of Trade Unionism as it then was, although largely justified, was uttered in tones of such bitterness, that the hostility provoked neutralised all efforts to bring the rank and file of the Trade Unionists in large numbers into the Federation. Nevertheless, individual leaders of the Federation, such as Burns, Will Thorne, Tom Mann, and others less known, did yeoman service in building up the "New Unionism," which has now almost entirely replaced the old. But with few exceptions these leaders retired from the Federation owing to differences concerning the usefulness of their tactics, or for personal reasons. But at the same time the Federation can claim to have given these men their first impulse to strive for the

establishment of a better state of Society, and to have shown them at least the difficulties which lay in the path towards the new social order.

In 1888 the London County Council was established and the Social Democratic Federation scored its first electoral success of any importance. John Burns was elected to the Council as a Labour and Socialist representative for Battersea. Soon afterwards, however, he followed the example of Morris, Champion, and many others, and resigned from the Federation and became absorbed in the vast work of governing the metropolis. Then came, in 1889, the Dock strike, which gave a tremendous impetus to the new Trade-Unionist movement which brought the so-called unskilled labourer into the army of organised labour. Socialist ideas were given wide dissemination by this event, for three of the leaders, Burns, Mann, and Champion, were still Socialists although no longer attached to the Social Democratic Federation. In the same year the International was reborn at the Congress of Paris. One of the results of this rebirth was the holding annually of great Labour demonstrations on the first Sunday in May in London and the big industrial centres. In the metropolis these gigantic gatherings were very impressive. They were organised by joint committees of the various Socialist organisations, Trade Unions, and Radical Clubs. Great processions marched to Hyde Park from all parts of London with bands and banners, and the vast crowds which assembled were addressed from a large number of platforms manned chiefly by Socialist speakers. These demonstrations were excellent occasions for Labour and Socialist propaganda, and full advantage was taken of them for this purpose. After some years, however, the day of celebration was changed to the first of May, which meant that, as a rule, the workers who attended the demonstrations were compelled to lose a day's work and pay, with the result that the crowds dwindled and were composed chiefly of the converted, and of these only the most ardent and self-sacrificing.

The Federation, in spite of the wide diffusion of Socialist views and its general acceptance of parliamentary action, never achieved success at parliamentary elections. In 1892 it only secured 659 votes for two candidates; in 1895, 3,730 votes for four candidates; in 1906, 22,000 votes for eight candidates. In 1910 this number fell to 3,810. This was a striking indication that the Federation had failed to reap the

harvest which it was largely responsible for sowing. The reason for this has already been explained. The leaders of the Federation were incapable of adapting themselves to the tradition of British working-class movements. The insistence upon Marxian doctrine brought them into direct opposition to the character and sentiment of the English people—a people practical, unphilosophic, and at bottom religious. Economic theories divorced from ethics are repellent to them. The class struggle, presented in an exaggerated and misleading phrase as the “class war,” was given a hard and repulsive aspect. It would have been a sounder policy, as Sidney Webb has declared, if the Federation had based its propaganda on Robert Owen.

The programme of the Federation has been modified from time to time, and after 1893 its object has been to bring about collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, managed by a democratic State in the interest of the whole Commonwealth; complete emancipation of labour from the domination of capital and landlords; establishment of social and economic equality between the sexes.

The interpretation of this programme has led to several defections from the Federation. In 1903 there was a Scottish secession which brought into existence the Socialist Labour Party pledged to extreme Marxism. In 1905 a group with similar ideas broke away and formed the Socialist Party of Great Britain and Ireland. By this time, however, such incidents were of small importance. The two organisations, although indefatigable in preaching their doctrines, did not affect the main stream of the British Labour movement, which was now steadily running in the direction of securing direct Labour representation on all public bodies from parish councils to Parliament, and, in a typically English fashion, leaving abstract doctrines to take care of themselves. But it should not be forgotten that, in spite of the errors committed during the Marxian phase of the movement, it was the spadework of the men who lived and toiled during that phase which first dug the channel which the swelling current has since broadened and deepened.

CHAPTER V

THE FABIANS AND THE I.L.P.

Reformist Socialism—Fellowship of the New Life—The Fabians—Bernard Shaw as propagandist—Influence of Sidney Webb—Fabian propaganda—The Workers' party—I.L.P. programme and methods—Advocates of political Labour—Trades Union Congress decides.

WHILE the Democratic Federation between 1881 and 1884 was gradually feeling its way towards a definite Marxian philosophy and policy, another and quite different type of Socialist thought and activity began to develop. The publication of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and the visit of the author to England had, as already related, evoked a strong interest in social questions, and this interest brought together a number of young men who have since made their mark in various spheres of English life and contributed in no small measure to the formation and growth of the British Labour Party.

In 1883 Thomas Davidson, "the wandering scholar," a Scotsman resident of the United States, a man of brilliant attainments and magnetic personality, who spent his life in lecturing and writing upon ethical and philosophical subjects, came to England and held several small meetings of young people, to whom he expounded his ideas of a Fellowship of the New Life. Among those present at the last of these gatherings were E. R. Pease and Frank Podmore, the latter well known as the author of the best and most discriminating of the biographies of Robert Owen. Pease and Podmore had already discussed the teaching of Henry George and had found a common bond in their interest in social and economic questions. Following Davidson's final meeting, another was held on 24th October, 1883, at 27 Osnaburgh Street, Regent's Park, at which was discussed the possibility of founding a Communistic Society "whose members should lead the higher life" foreshadowed by Davidson. The idea of forming such

a society was ultimately decided to be impossible. But it was also agreed that further discussions should be held by those present with the object of ascertaining how the higher life could be realised by other methods. From this date, 24th October, 1883, fortnightly meetings have been held for nine months in the year without a break under the auspices of the organisation which was thus called into existence, and which on 4th January, 1884, was given the name of the Fabian Society.

A number of those who attended the first meeting remained in a separate body entitled the Fellowship of the New Life, which continued in existence for fifteen years. Its best-known members were Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, and J. Ramsay MacDonald. It published a quarterly journal entitled *Seedtime*, which appeared from July 1889 to February 1898. This contained articles on the Simple Life, Humanitarianism, the Education of Children, and similar subjects. The Fellowship endeavoured to carry out the community idea by means of a co-operative residence, but this experiment was not strikingly successful. It also established a small printing business at Croydon, carried on a Kindergarten, and founded an Ethical Society. In 1898 its career ended, the members coming to the conclusion that the work of the Fellowship was done.

The Fabian Society, the more robust twin body, was given its name—since become celebrated throughout the globe—at the suggestion of Frank Podmore, as an indication of the policy, that of Fabius Cunctator, the famous Roman general, which the Society would adopt. The aim of the association was declared to be “the reconstruction of society in accordance with the highest moral principles.” On 23rd November the following resolution was adopted :

“ The members of the Society assert that the competitive system assures the happiness and comfort of the few at the expense of the suffering of the many, and that society must be reconstituted in such a manner as to ensure the general welfare and happiness.”

It would seem that it was at this meeting that a division of opinion arose that led to the formation of two instead of one society. The members who were less interested in economics and politics and more in ethics devoted themselves

mainly to the Fellowship of the New Life, although keeping in touch with the other body.

The object of the Fabian Society, "the reconstitution of society" so as to assure the general welfare and happiness, was obviously a formidable one for a handful of young middle-class people to undertake. They rightly decided that their first business was self-education. Accordingly, the fortnightly meetings were used for the purpose of lectures and discussions on the questions with which the Society was chiefly concerned. It was also agreed that the members should attend meetings held on social subjects, debates at workmen's clubs and the like, to report the proceedings to the Society and to put forward the views of the Society. Further, that measures should be taken to obtain the fullest and most reliable information on all contemporary social movements and social needs.

Only two of the men who have done most to earn for the Fabian Society the reputation it has acquired during the last forty years were present at the proceedings, by no means dramatic, which resulted in the birth of the Society. These two were E. R. Pease, who for several decades was its chief executive officer and is still its Honorary Secretary,¹ and Hubert Bland, a journalist, whose writings in the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle* had an immense vogue in the North of England, and who for twenty-seven years was the Society's Treasurer. Among the early members was one "genuine" working man, who, it is believed, drafted the first of the famous Fabian Tracts, "Why are the many poor?" which is still in print and in demand. The tract had on its title-page two mottoes, ascribed to Frank Podmore. Though printed as quotations, they are not to be found in any history :

"Wherefore it may not be gainsaid that the fruit of this man's long taking of counsel—and (by the many so deemed) untimorous delays—was the safeholding for all men, his fellow citizens, of the Common Weal.

"For the right moment you must wait as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be vain and fruitless."

The second motto, taken by itself, has been the cause of many comments, some humorous, others sarcastic, on the

¹ In 1924. The General Secretary is F. W. Galton, who has held that office since 1920.

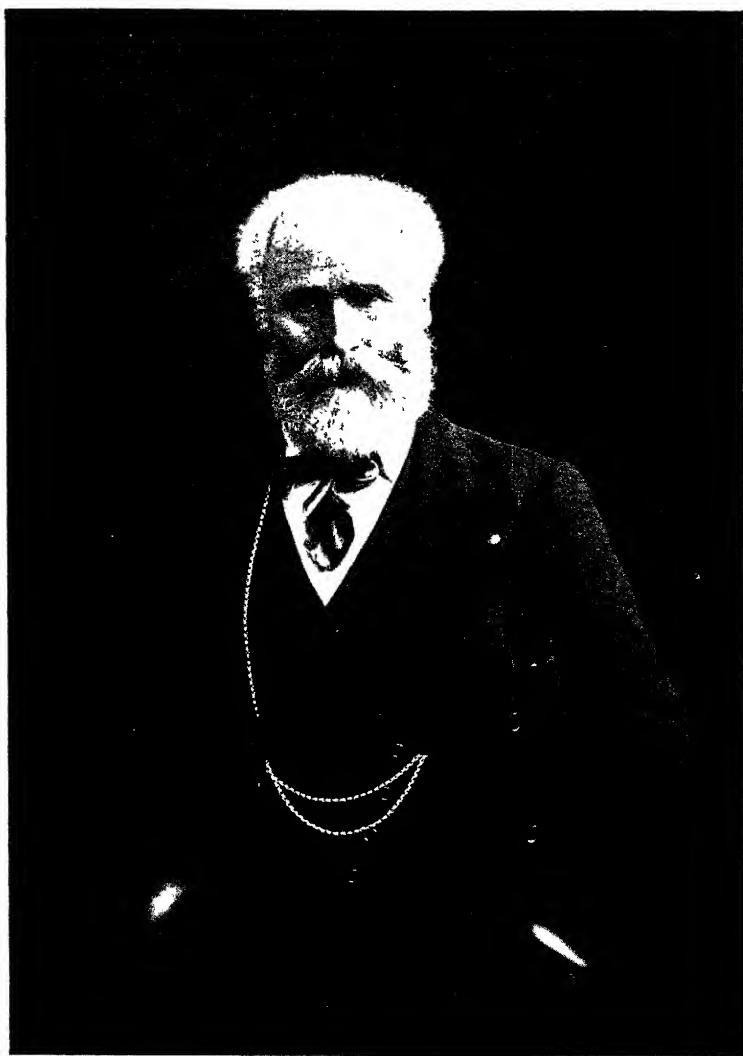
part of Socialists who considered themselves to be more advanced or more revolutionary. H. M. Hyndman, for instance, who was everything that is not a Fabian in temperament, enjoyed the laughter he caused when he described the Society as the "Mr. Micawber Society—always waiting for something to turn up." In reality the two mottoes, taken in conjunction, indicated the modesty of the little group. They recognised that they must learn how to remedy social evils before they could do anything effectual to carry out their object; they must before striking take "counsel," that is, acquire knowledge and experience.

It is worthy of note that the word "Socialism" does not occur in the records of the Society until its sixth meeting, held on 21st March, 1884, when a paper was read in which the Socialism of the Fabian Society was compared with that of the Democratic Federation. Neither in Tracts Nos. 1 and 2 does the word occur, although the object of the Society was avowedly the reconstruction of society on a non-competitive basis. It was not before June 1885 that we find this passage: "The Fabian Society having in view the advance of Socialism in England." It occurs in Tract No. 3, published at that date. This is typical of the disregard of phrases which has distinguished the Society from the very beginning.

The young band of enthusiastic but modest and almost diffident Socialists secured their most notable recruit in the first year of the existence of their little group. It is recorded in the minutes of a meeting held on 16th May, 1884, that Bernard Shaw was present as a visitor. On 5th September following he was elected a member of the Society, and a fortnight later his first literary contribution was made. It took the form of a manifesto in which the aims of the Fabians of that early period were set forth with the literary skill and provocativeness for which the author has since secured worldwide fame. It was published as Tract No. 2. The propositions it sets forth would now be considered as crude and not thought out, but they contained the germs of the social philosophy which Shaw has expanded and developed in the remarkable prefaces to his plays, which are the most acute, striking, and suggestive criticisms of society that have been written during the last thirty years.

The influence of Bernard Shaw on the growth and activity of the Fabian Society and on the Labour and Socialist movement generally can hardly be overestimated. But his power

as a propagandist, both with pen and tongue, was only acquired by the exercise of the infinite capacity for taking pains which is said to be the sign of genius. His gifts as a speaker were cultivated by him with an intensity rarely equalled by protagonists of any cause. During the early years of the Fabian Society he spoke night after night, Sunday after Sunday, at meetings large and small, in halls or in the open air, until he became, and remains, the one public figure who can, not only in London, but in all large centres of population, always draw a great audience of people willing to pay for the pleasure of hearing him speak. A lecture by Bernard Shaw will always attract a big assembly made up of individuals of all classes in the community who have some elements of intellectual life or intellectual curiosity. His study of economics was undertaken with the same thoroughness with which he pursued the art of oratory. He is one of the few British Socialists who has taken the trouble to read and understand Marx, and hence his criticism of Marxian doctrines and his exposition of the Jevonian theory of value are most effective and lucid. They have perhaps been the greatest influence in preventing the Marxian legend from dominating the British Labour and Socialist movement. Not that Shaw has belittled the work of the great German thinker. On the contrary, he has paid handsome tribute to Marx as the greatest critic of the capitalist system, while at the same time indicating the errors into which he fell as an economist in adopting and adapting the Labour theory of value enunciated by Ricardo, and, as a philosopher, in basing his theory of revolutionary Socialism on a materialist interpretation of Hegelian philosophy. Shaw's discussion of these and other recondite and abstract subjects was rendered not only clear, but fascinating by the attractiveness of his style, and lightened by his irrepressible humour, which, in those days, was but seldom part of the equipment of the earnest Socialist. One can say without exaggeration that in Shaw was embodied the boast of Ferdinand Lassalle, that "Socialism was equipped with all the culture of the age." And although he responded to the call of the arts, dramatic, musical, and pictorial—in all of which he practised as a critic of the first rank, and in one of which he has become the greatest living master—he never lost touch with the realities of the political, economic, and social life of our time: realities which were and often remain ugly, sordid, and repellent. On committees he has co-operated



J. KEIR HARDIE.
Founder of the Independent Labour Party.

with workmen Socialists seething with revolt, suspicious, not seldom ignorant and cantankerous ; he has conscientiously carried out the duties of a municipal councillor ; and spent hours beyond number in expounding Fabian Socialist economics and policy to tiny audiences in small rooms in the poorest quarters of the metropolis. Through these experiences in many and widely different spheres he obtained the knowledge of human nature—especially from the social point of view—which flashes out so brilliantly in his dramas and in his political and economic writings.

The power exercised by Bernard Shaw over his audiences is not due to the use of eloquent rhetoric—for which, in fact, he has little use outside the theatre. The charm he possesses as a speaker consists in the care with which he takes to make his arguments perfectly understandable ; in the polish of his periods and the aptness of his illustrations. His voice is of a delightful quality, light but penetrating ; and the close reasoning of a long economic discussion of which Shaw is a master is always kept from becoming dull by the quickness, originality, and lightness of his playful and sometimes paradoxical wit. One of the best examples of this is to be found in his *The Impossibility of Anarchism*, given as a lecture to the Fabian Society in 1891 and afterwards published as Tract 47, which still holds the field as the most complete critical analysis of the anarchist position, together with a powerful defence of the Socialist attitude towards society. The element of surprise is often used by Shaw to arouse attention. An instance of this is the title of one of his lectures given many years ago at Toynbee Hall to a crowd of more or less revolutionary East End workmen : “The Working Class is useless, unnecessary, and ought to be abolished.” The listeners were no doubt not altogether agreeably disappointed in their expectations of an opportunity for a battle-royal in debate by discovering, as the lecturer proceeded with his theme, that he proposed to abolish the status of the working class by getting rid of capitalism. On another occasion, in 1885, Shaw was a delegate to the Industrial Remuneration Conference held at Princes Hall, Piccadilly. The Conference was summoned to discuss the question :

“Has the increase of products of industry within the last hundred years tended most to the benefit of capitalists and employers, or to that of the working classes, whether artisans,

labourers, or others ? and in what relative proportions in any given period ? ”

The Conference was attended by persons holding all kinds of differing opinions. Among those present was the Right Hon. Arthur Balfour, who read a paper on the subject of “Would the more general distribution of capital and land or the State management of capital or land promote or impair the production of wealth and the welfare of the community ? ” Bernard Shaw took part in the discussion which followed. It was probably the first time he had spoken to an audience of more than local importance. One passage from his speech is an excellent illustration of his method of treating a subject.

“ It was,” he said, “ the desire of the chairman that nothing should be said that might give pain to particular classes. He was about to refer to a modern class, the burglars, but if there was a burglar present, he begged him to believe that he cast no reflection upon his profession, and that he was not unmindful of his great skill and enterprise ; his risks —so much greater than those of the most speculative capitalist, extending as they did to risk of liberty and life—his abstinence ; or finally of the great number of people to whom he gave employment, including criminal attorneys, policemen, turnkeys, builders of gaols, and it might be the hangman. He did not wish to hurt the feelings of shareholders . . . or of landlords . . . any more than he wished to pain burglars. He would merely point out that all three inflicted on the community an injury of precisely the same nature.”

Bernard Shaw is mainly responsible for giving to the Fabians a mental attitude which may be described in the words of R. L. Stevenson as “ gaiety of mind,” and which has often been misunderstood. It should be remembered that in its early years the Society was composed largely of comparatively young people who in their desire to discover a working social philosophy often discussed proposals which were crude, extreme, or eccentric.

“ And this meant,” says Shaw, “ that we had no true practical understanding either of existing society or of Socialism. Without being quite definitely aware of this, we yet felt it to a certain extent all along ; for it was at that period

that we contracted the invaluable habit of laughing at ourselves which has always distinguished us, and which has saved us from becoming hampered by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements. From the first such people fled after one glance at us, declaring that we were not serious. Our preference for practical suggestions and criticisms, and our impatience of all general expressions of sympathy with working-class aspirations, not to mention our chaffing our opponents in preference to denouncing them as enemies of the human race, repelled from us some warm-hearted and eloquent Socialists, to whom it seemed callous and cynical to be even commonly self-possessed in the presence of the sufferings upon which Socialists make war. But there was too much equality and personal intimacy among the Fabians to allow of any member presuming to get up and preach at the rest in the fashion which the working classes still tolerate submissively from their leaders. We knew that a certain sort of oratory was useful for 'stoking up' public meetings ; but we needed no stoking up, and, when any orator tried the process on us, soon made him understand that he was wasting his time and ours. . . . And the irreverence which has become traditional with us comes down from those early days when we often talked such nonsense that we could not help laughing at ourselves."

It must, however, be mentioned that this refusal of the Fabians to close their eyes to the humorous and ironical aspect of human affairs has had its disadvantages. Reformers endowed with a sense of humour are readily suspected of a lack of sincerity. The Fabian Society and Bernard Shaw himself have not escaped this suspicion, especially among people who consider that in order to be earnest, single-minded, and determined in a righteous cause it is necessary to be always obvious, sententious, and solemn.

In May 1885 the Society added to its membership roll the name of Sidney Webb. This date marks a turning-point in the history of the Society. Sidney Webb placed unreservedly at its service his passion for acquiring, elucidating, and disseminating facts, his prodigious industry, his extraordinary creative skill, and his talent for committee work. From the date of his entrance the Fabian Society began to take the place it has since occupied in the Labour and Socialist movement—that of the collector of exact information with regard

to social, industrial, and political problems, and the inventor of practical methods for their solution. It is undoubtedly the influence of Sidney Webb which turned the undisciplined enthusiasm of the early Fabians into constructive channels and made them aware of the necessity of having the fullest possible knowledge of the subjects in which they were chiefly interested. It is characteristic that the first two Fabian Tracts for which he was responsible are: No. 5, *Facts for Socialists*, which has gone into many editions and has provided material for countless Socialist speeches and lectures; and No. 8, *Facts for Londoners*, published in 1889, "an exhaustive collection of statistical and other facts relating to the metropolis, with suggestions for reform on Socialist principles," as its sub-title reads.

Sydney Olivier (now Lord Olivier), then a colleague of Sidney Webb in the Colonial Office, joined the Society in the same period. Graham Wallas, an attractive personality and persuasive speaker, later a distinguished professor of the London University and a leading member of the London School Board, became a member in the following year. Already Mrs. Annie Besant, who had made a name in another field of public life, and William Clarke, an able lecturer and writer, were Fabians. Including these two, all the writers of the famous Fabian Essays were now in the ranks of the Society and were its most representative members. They controlled the Society for a number of years and created its distinctive atmosphere and policy.

It is not possible to give in a few words a complete idea of what Fabianism meant to the majority of those who have taken part in the activities of the Society. In order fully to understand and appreciate its peculiar qualities, it is necessary not only to study the exceedingly numerous publications issued by the Society itself during the forty years of its existence, but also the many works of its prominent members published by them independently. The best short summing-up of the Society's aims and policy is, perhaps, contained in the following extract from Tract No. 70, *Report on Fabian Policy* (1896):

"The object of the Fabian Society is to persuade the English people to make their political constitution thoroughly democratic, and so to socialise their industries as to make the livelihood of the people entirely independent of private capitalism.

“ The Fabian Society endeavours to pursue its Socialist and Democratic objects with complete singleness of aim. For example :

“ It has no distinctive opinions on the Marriage Question, Religion, Art, Abstract Economics, Historic Evolution, Currency, or any other subject than its own special business of practical Democracy and Socialism.

“ It brings all the pressure and persuasion in its power to bear on existing forms, caring nothing by what name any party calls itself or what principles, Socialist or other, it professes, but, having regard solely to the tendency of its actions, supporting those which make for Socialism and Democracy and opposing those which are reactionary.

“ It does not propose that the practical steps towards Social-Democracy should be carried out by itself or by any other specially organised society or party.”

This declaration is, and was intended to be, a defiant challenge to dogmatic Marxism. It is characteristically English in its rejection of abstract principles and open confession of opportunism. In the first dozen years of its life the Society acted upon it with complete consistency. Its leaders recognised that, in order to spread Socialist ideas successfully, it was necessary for Socialist propagandists to be equipped with something more than indignation and emotional revolt against existing social conditions expressed in torrents of turgid rhetoric. Hence they devoted themselves, inspired by Sidney Webb, to the provision of information on social, political, and industrial questions, mainly in the form of pamphlets, which now number over two hundred, and which earned the reluctant approval of Frederick Engels, to whom Fabian anti-Marxism was naturally almost blasphemy. The pioneers of the Social Democratic Federation, while they jeered at Fabian “ gas-and-water Socialism,” eagerly perused Fabian publications for ammunition to fire at the landlord and capitalist, whose citadel they hoped to capture quickly by storm. The Fabians, not at all resenting the derisive comments of their Marxian critics, proceeded systematically by voice and pen to permeate public opinion with Socialist views. Liberal and Radical organisations, trade unions and co-operative societies, debating societies of all complexions, meetings of every description, were supplied with Fabian lecturers and speakers on social and political topics, and given instruction

in Socialist doctrine. This policy of permeation was not, as it was at one time held to be the case, confined to the Liberal Party. It was practised wherever an opportunity presented itself, no matter how small the promise of successful results might be.

Of the long array of books and tracts issued either by the Fabian Society or by its prominent members, *Fabian Essays in Socialism* takes the foremost place among modern British Socialist literature. The essays form an exposition of the various aspects of Socialism based on English conditions and treated from a sane and sober English point of view. Given first as lectures in 1888, they were published in the following years, and although the authors, with the exception of Mrs. Besant, were almost unknown to the general public, the book had an immediate success. In a month the first edition of 1,000 was sold out, and then a number of cheap editions followed. Over 60,000 copies have been bought, and the sale continues of the latest edition, which contains prefaces by Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, explaining the origin of the Essays and pointing out the other and later works in which deficiencies and omissions have been made good.

The value of *Fabian Essays* (in spite of the faults arising from insufficient knowledge and experience which they contain) to the Socialist and Labour Movement of Great Britain is admirably weighed by E. R. Pease, the Honorary Secretary of the Society, in the following passage from his *History of the Fabian Society* :

“ *Fabian Essays* presented the case for Socialism in plain language which everybody could understand. It based Socialism, not on the speculations of a German philosopher, but on the obvious evolution of society as we see it around us. It accepted economic science as taught by the accredited British professors ; it built up the edifice of Socialism on the foundations of our existing political and social institutions ; it proved that Socialism was but the next step in the development of society, rendered inevitable by the changes which followed from the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century.”

The policy of permeation which the Fabian Society carried on with such energy did not preclude the advocacy of the formation of a new political party to represent the workers.

It is true that the Society never had the ambition to be that party itself, nor to be the actual creators and leaders of it. Moreover, the experience of the Social Democratic Federation and its failure to organise the masses politically into a Socialist Party on similar lines to those adopted on the Continent, notably in Germany, did not offer much encouragement to such an ambition. Nevertheless, the Society recognised that a workers' political party was indispensable to the realisation of the Socialist programme. As far back as 1887 E. R. Pease stated in *To-day* that the chief aim of the Fabian plan was the formation of a distinct Labour Party in Parliament. In 1892, just before the General Election, a Fabian Election Manifesto, brilliantly written by Bernard Shaw, was issued in which both the existing parties were severely and acutely criticised, and the working classes were told that they could form their own party, if they cared as much for politics as they did for horse-racing. Again, in 1893, when the Liberal Government had failed lamentably to carry out the promise made by Sir Henry (then Mr.) Campbell-Bannerman "to show themselves to be the best employers of labour in the country," Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb published an article in the *Fortnightly Review* entitled "To your Tents, O Israel!" in which it was pointed out that, with rare exceptions, none of the Government Departments had done anything to redeem Campbell-Bannerman's pledge, and the workers were called upon to abandon Liberalism and form a Trade Union Party of their own, and run fifty candidates for Parliament. This article was afterwards reprinted, with much additional matter drafted by Bernard Shaw, as Tract No. 49, *A Plan of Campaign for Labour*. The tract had a wide circulation, and, showing as it did in considerable detail how a Workers' Party ought to be established, it no doubt had no small share in the development of the movement for the foundation of the Labour Party which, seven years later, took shape under the title of the Labour Representation Committee.

There were, indeed, signs at this period that, as far as the Liberal Party was concerned, permeation could go no farther; the old bottles could not contain any more new wine. Later, in the twentieth century, Mr. Lloyd George revivified the Liberal Party by attaching to it a social programme drawn from Socialist sources. But this effort at rejuvenation came too late: by that time the Labour Party was an accomplished fact.

While the Fabians from their centre in the metropolis were

thus combining education in Socialist ideas with the propagation of views in favour of direct Labour representation in Parliament, in Scotland, as already related, practical steps were being taken to form a Workers' Party. In 1888 James Keir Hardie stood at a parliamentary by-election in Mid-Lanark as an Independent Labour candidate and polled 712 votes. Following this contest a meeting was held at Glasgow, attended by Cunningham Graham, Keir Hardie, and other Scottish Socialists, at which the Scottish Labour Party was formed. An advance programme with a strong Socialistic tinge was drawn up and adopted. Sporadic efforts were made in industrial towns in Yorkshire to form organisations on similar lines, the most successful being at Bradford, where the Labour Union was founded as the result of an extensive local strike in 1890. The propaganda in the North was carried on chiefly by Ben Tillett, Robert Blatchford, and Joseph Burgess, the editor of the weekly journal *The Workman's Times*. In 1892 a fillip was given to the movement at the General Election of that year by the return to Parliament of John Burns for Battersea, Keir Hardie for West Ham, and J. Havelock Wilson for Middlesbrough, all of whom stood either as Socialist or Independent Labour candidates. Ben Tillett, whose election campaign was supported financially by the Fabian Society, polled 2,749 votes at Bradford. These results indicated that progress had been made since 1885, when the Social Democratic election fiasco took place.

In the autumn of 1892 a conference was held at Bradford for the purpose of uniting the various scattered local independent labour organisations into a national party. About 120 delegates were present, including five from the Social Democratic Federation and twelve from the Fabian Society. The conference decided to form a new organisation with a Socialist programme but without a Socialist title. The name selected was the Independent Labour Party. Neither the Fabian Society nor the Social Democratic Federation joined the new body. The Fabian Society, which then had a number of daughter societies in the provinces, made no objections when these societies gradually turned themselves into branches of the Independent Labour Party. On the other hand, the Social Democratic Federation could not altogether conceal its hostility to the new venture. Its leaders were inclined to take up the attitude of pioneers whose claims had been jumped by new-comers.

There was indeed little difference between the programme of the older organisations and the new, but the methods of the Independent Labour Party diverged greatly from those of the Social Democratic Federation. The Independent Labour Party made its appeal to the ethical and democratic sentiments of the British worker. Strong efforts were made to win over the Trade Unionists, not by attacking them for the narrowness of their outlook, but by pointing out the illogicality of organising independently of the employers for economic purposes and, at the same time, supporting in the political field the parties which represented in the main the employing and possessing classes. Little stress was laid upon the class war and other Marxian doctrines, but, at the same time, the necessity of complete independence on the part of the workers in politics was insisted upon. In a word, the chief aim was to build up a machine which would find its purpose when it was strong enough for action.

One of the greatest assets to the Independent Labour Party in its youthful days was the pen of Robert Blatchford. Born of working-class parents, he had known poverty and the limitations that condition imposes upon those who live in it. After working as a brushmaker, he became a soldier and then a journalist. In 1890, when he became converted to Socialism, he was a popular writer on the staff of the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*. This position he resigned in 1891 and founded and edited the *Clarion*, a journal which has had during its adventurous and somewhat varied career a great influence on the Socialist Movement, especially in the north of England. Robert Blatchford produced a number of works embodying his views of Socialism, written in the attractive and easy style for which he has earned a just reputation. *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British* are the best known of his writings. They have had an enormous circulation and have been instrumental in winning over large numbers of adherents to the Labour and Socialist cause. In temperament he is somewhat akin to H. M. Hyndman in that he is inclined at times to be more anti-Liberal than pro-Labour, and his patriotism is of the kind that flies readily to the rifle. In addition, he has no head for practical politics, and this makes him a somewhat uncertain colleague. But there can be no doubt that he was one of the personal forces which brought the Labour Party into existence by the service he rendered to the Independent Labour Party.

The leading platform figure of the Independent Labour Party was Keir Hardie, whose persistency and consistency never wavered. He was in truth the living embodiment of the spirit of independent Labour, the rock on which the new party was built. His colleague, Bruce Glasier, was equally devoted. Glasier's mind was bent towards religion ; to him the basis of Socialism was spiritual and humanitarian, and not economic and materialistic. He had been associated with William Morris in the days of the defunct Socialist League, and had caught from the artist-poet something of his spirit.

Among others who joined the Party and became its most active spirits in the earlier days were Fred W. Jowett, J. R. Clynes, Pete Curran, Ben Tillett, Ben Turner, George N. Barnes, and later J. Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, and W. C. Anderson. A notable feature of the I.L.P.'s propaganda was its successful appeal to women, and among its earliest platform speakers were Enid Stacey, Katharine St. John Conway (later Mrs. J. Bruce Glasier), Margaret McMillan, Caroline Martyn, Isabella Ford, and more recently, Mary MacArthur and Margaret Bondfield. Among many notables who have passed through its ranks may be mentioned Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, who left the Party to devote the whole of her energies to the Women's Suffrage Movement, and Tom Mann, who acted as Secretary, prior to that office being filled by John Penny and for 25 years by Francis Johnson. In 1924 the I.L.P. made further changes, and A. Fenner Brockway became General Secretary.

Thus the party had at its command a band of propagandists who could draw popular audiences far larger than those willing to listen to the speakers of the two older parties.

Yet for some years it seemed as if the Independent Labour Party was fated to meet with the same want of success that had attended the efforts of the Social Democratic Federation. The Liberal elements among the Trade Union leaders were still strong, and they fought for the continuance of their ascendancy over the rank and file with rare obstinacy. In 1895, in spite of three years' widespread and steady propaganda, the party did not return one of its twenty-eight candidates ; Keir Hardie lost his seat at West Ham. Altogether the party candidates received 44,320 votes. This was an encouraging sign, but it did not compensate for the absence of Hardie's voice from the House of Commons.

From 1895 to 1900 there was, on the surface at least, a lull in the political Labour Movement. The Conservatives

were in office ; interest in home politics was apparently for the moment on the decline ; the attention of the public was being drawn towards South Africa, where events were gradually leading up to the war which broke out in 1899. But the calm was more apparent than real. Disappointed at parliamentary elections, the leaders of the Independent Labour Party kept the flag flying at municipal contests, with the result that many town councils became the training-schools in public affairs for men who later have acquired reputations as Labour parliamentarians. Propaganda went on unceasingly. The Fabian Society continued to publish its tracts and to send its lecturers into the provinces. Above all, the Trade Unions were beginning at last to realise that political organisation of the workers must be established side by side with organisation for economic purposes. This idea had been dinned into the ears of the rank and file of the unions until it was impossible for them to ignore it. Further, recent legal decisions concerning trade union rights had caused the organised workers to feel that their economic defences were in danger and that it was high time they sought new weapons. This mental attitude made it possible for a definite advance to be made towards the object for which the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Independent Labour Party had been working, each in its own special way.

In 1899 the Trades Union Congress was held at Plymouth. Prior to its assembling, the leaders of the Independent Labour Party drafted a resolution for the purpose of promoting Labour representation, and handed it over, through the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, to James Holmes, one of the delegates to the Congress. The text of this resolution was as follows :

“ This Congress, having regard to its decisions in former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the co-operation of all the co-operative, socialistic, trade unions, and other working organisations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon, in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above-mentioned organisations as may be willing to take part, to devise ways and means for securing the return of an increased number of labour members to the next Parliament.”

The resolution was stoutly opposed by the old guard of the Trade Union movement, but nevertheless it was carried by 546,000 votes to 434,000. This was a notable victory for the promoters of independent Labour representation.

Fortunately for the success of the proposal contained in the resolution, it was not left to the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress to carry out. If it had been, little or nothing might have resulted. It was decided that the practical application of the resolution should be placed in the hands of a special committee appointed for the purpose, composed of four members of the Parliamentary Committee: Sam Woods, W. C. Steadman, Will Thorne, and Richard Bell; and two members each from the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society; Keir Hardie, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Harry Quelch, H. R. Taylor, G. B. Shaw, and E. R. Pease. The Socialists were in the majority on the committee, and being more energetic and more certain of the object they hoped to attain, they had very much their own way. A Conference was arranged and resolutions to be submitted to it were drawn up. The date of the Conference was fixed for 27th and 28th February, 1900.

The story of this Conference belongs to a new chapter in the history of the Labour Party. The resolution carried at the Plymouth Trades Union Congress marks the end of the pioneer period of the Labour and Socialist Movement in England. The foundations of the Labour Party were laid; during the following years the existing edifice was rapidly and securely built upon them. But changes so fundamental and far-reaching in the aims and methods of the trade unions require further explanation. How did it come about that the industrially organised workers at the opening of the present century were able to make common cause with the Socialists in organising a political party? The next chapter describes the process of conversion carried on by the Socialists in the Trade Union.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIALISM IN THE TRADE UNIONS

The Parliament of Labour—Politics in Trades Union Congress—Liberal-Labourism—Growing tension—Socialist pressure—The new departure—Historic Congress at Plymouth—Foundations of the Labour Party—Socialists and Trade Unionists frame a plan.

THE Trades Union Congress meeting annually in September formed before the advent of the Labour Party, as we have seen in earlier chapters, the great forum for the discussion of Labour problems.

The Congress included delegates sent from all the great national Trade Unions as well as from many smaller local unions and trades councils. The effective work of the Congress lay in its discussion, not of the technical disputes of its constituent unions, but of the general problems of legislation and combined action which affect the working class as a whole. Occasionally its services were utilised as an arbitrator in a dispute between two unions, but this lay rather beyond the general function of the Congress, which since 1868 consistently aimed at being the "Parliament of Labour." Its executive body, the Parliamentary Committee, was elected annually by the delegates, and attempted, by the process known as "lobbying" in the House of Commons, to influence the members of Parliament on any subjects which were being discussed in the House and which affected working-class conditions in general or the interests of Trade Unionists in particular. From the nature of its work, and the fact that its members were meeting frequently and in touch with one another all the time, the Parliamentary Committee formed almost a Cabinet for the Congress, and the positions on the Committee were eagerly contested each year.

The influence exerted by the members of the Parliamentary Committee, whether in placing their views by deputation before Cabinet Ministers and the heads of Government

Departments, or in bringing pressure to bear on individual members of Parliament, was in practice limited by two factors. The chief of these was the size of the Congress itself, since as the Congress grew to represent a considerable proportion of the adult male population (i.e. the electors), its influence naturally carried more weight with the party politicians of the day. The second consideration was that the Congress during its annual session must show a large measure of unanimity in its decisions on the major subjects discussed, since the existence of divided views in the Congress itself nullified its influence with the Government and with the members of Parliament. For the latter reason the leaders of the Trade Unionists, in arranging the subjects to be discussed, excluded for many years many topics which closely affected Trade Unionists, but on which opinions were more or less evenly divided.

As a whole the organised workers of Britain were attached to the Liberal Party in politics, and the first "Labour" members of Parliament, though they were leading Trade Unionists, such as Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, were elected as members of that party. As time went on this Liberal-Labour representation grew until it was common for a fair number of the members of the Parliamentary Committee to be also members of Parliament. That the attachment of Trade Unionists was not wholly given to the Liberal Party was shown by the fact that one of the leading members of the Parliamentary Committee, James Mawdsley, stood as a Conservative candidate in the election of 1906. No Conservative Trade Unionist, however, was actually elected to Parliament. In any case, the number of working-class representatives in Parliament was strictly limited by the extortion from the candidates themselves of heavy election expenses as well as by the refusal of payment to members who were elected and giving full time service. Apart from the Employers' Liability Bill, which was pressed for with considerable force, it might be said that up till 1885 the resolutions passed by the Trades Union Congress mainly coincided with the programme of the Liberal Party. When the Congress differed from the Liberal leaders, its proposals met with short shrift. The manifesto issued by the Parliamentary Committee prior to the General Election of 1885 fell short of the "Unauthorised Programme" of that capitalist radical, Joseph Chamberlain. The Congress itself, a little more progressive and courageous

than the Committee, added to the manifesto three points—Payment of Election Expenses, Payment of Members, and Free Education—which had been omitted in deference to Gladstone's official Liberal programme. The position has been summed up by the historians of Trade Unionism :

“ The assimilation of the political creed of the Trade Union leaders with that of the official Liberal Party was perfectly sincere. . . . The Junta had begun to be unconsciously converted from the traditional position of Trade Unionism to the principle of Administrative Nihilism then dominant in the middle class. . . . The able and conscientious men who formed the Front Bench of the Trades Union Congress of 1876-85 had grown up without any alternative political theory, and had accordingly erected the objection to legislative interference or Governmental administration into an absolute dogma. *Laissez-faire* was the political and social creed of the Trade Union leaders of this time.”¹

We thus find that the dominant current of thought in 1885 was an extreme individualism. Within eight years an amazing change was to take place : the Trade Union movement was permeated with collectivist thought and by 1893 the Socialists held supreme power in the Trades Union Congress. Various phases of this change, the men and the organisations they built up for the purpose of bringing it about, in the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, and the Independent Labour Party, have already been discussed. To no one stream of thought, to no one clearly defined school of politics can the whole credit of the change be given. The complacency of the British working-class movement, as we have seen, had been deeply stirred by the campaign carried on by the American land reformer Henry George in the early eighties and by the wide circulation of his book *Progress and Poverty*. The Liberal policy of universal peasant proprietors which had become a “ hardy annual ” at Trades Union Congresses was first opposed and then defeated by a resolution declaring for land nationalisation. The Newcastle Congress in 1891 went one stage farther and made land nationalisation a test question for all parliamentary candidates. This was the first main plank of the Collectivist programme. It was to be followed by others.

The question of the interference with the hours of labour of adult men formed another subject of contention. The

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 374.

Liberal-Labourists stood at first for the extreme individualist position that there should be no interference with the rights of the individual to work as long as he cared. This was, however, modified to the point when they supported the limitation of the hours of labour if obtained by the efforts of Trade Union organisation. In opposition to this the Socialists in the Trades Union Congress demanded the limitation of all labour to eight hours per day by means of legislation. Year by year this tussle went on. At the Dundee Congress of 1889 the vote was overwhelmingly against the enforcement by law of an eight hours day. At Liverpool the following year it was carried by a narrow majority of the delegates. Nothing, however, resulted as the Parliamentary Committee was too divided, and the following Congress at Newcastle (1891) achieved the peculiar result of carrying it one day and virtually reversing it on the next. In the course of the next four years opinion developed with the result of a decisive vote in favour of legislation for the eight-hour day of 625,000 to 222,000.

While the fight on this subject was going on the Socialists, led by Keir Hardie, Tom Mann, and John Burns, were assailing Broadhurst and Fenwick for their continued support in Parliament of the Liberal Party, and for the assistance they gave at General Elections and by-elections to employers of labour (such as Sir John Brunner) who were Liberal candidates. With the growth of the movement for independent Labour candidates, standing in three-cornered contests, in which the Liberal-Labour Trade Unionists were speaking on behalf of the official Liberal against an independent workers' candidate, the tension at the annual Congresses grew stronger. It led to many bitter personal attacks. In 1889 Broadhurst and his confrères completely defeated Hardie and his followers, but the following year at Liverpool the situation was reversed, and Broadhurst took an early opportunity of retiring, on the ground of ill-health, from his position as the chief official—the secretary of the Parliamentary Committee.

At the Belfast Congress in 1893, during a discussion on Labour Representation initiated by Ben Tillett, of the London Dockers, James Macdonald moved an amendment to the scheme declaring that "candidates receiving financial assistance must pledge themselves to support the principle of collective ownership and control of all the means of production and distribution, and the Labour programme as agreed upon from time to time by the Congress." The amendment was



RT. HON. LORD ARNOLD.
A Member of the Labour Government.

strongly supported by Pete Curran, John Burns, and J. R. Clynes, and was carried by 137 votes to 97. But seven years were to elapse before an independent Labour Representation Committee was formed, in 1900, and then only on the basis of a compromise between the Trade Union element and the Socialists to the effect that "Independence" and not Socialism was to be the common basis of action.

The trend of events was indicated very clearly at the following Congress a year later, held at Norwich. Here we find the older school standing by the Land Nationalisation plank as a sufficiently broad programme, whilst Keir Hardie attempted, and succeeded in extending it to embrace a full measure of collectivism as a basis of society. A Manchester delegate moved a resolution declaring "that, in the opinion of this Congress, it is essential to the maintenance of British Industries to nationalise the land, mines, minerals, and royalty rents." Keir Hardie wished to delete the last three items enumerated and insert "and the whole of the means of production, distribution, and exchange." He said he was unable to understand any argument in favour of the nationalisation of lands and mines which did not equally apply to the nationalisation of every form of production. If the mines from which the minerals were taken were to be nationalised, why not the railways which conveyed those minerals, the depots where they were deposited, and the works in which they were manufactured. For every £1 taken by the landlords in the form of rent, £2 were taken by the capitalists in the form of interest. He had no objection to the question being dealt with in sections, but he did not wish the Congress to pass any half-hearted resolution on the matter. There was no reason why the landlord should be attacked and the capitalist allowed to go free. The only true solution of the problem was to dispense with the means whereby the workers were held enthralled, and to introduce a system in which competition, with all its fearful results, should disappear and a genuine co-operative communal brotherhood take its place.¹

On a division Hardie's amendment was carried by 219 to 61. The ability and personality of the leading Socialists in the Congress had naturally a large part in the change of opinion. Year by year the discussions in the Parliament of Labour altered the entire trend of Trade Union thought, a

¹ Davis, *History of Trade Union Congress*, vol. ii, p. 94.

process aided by the incessant propaganda carried on up and down the country by Socialist speakers.

Before the next Congress some outstanding political events occurred. Gladstone, whose personality had dominated the Liberal Party, resigned office and his place was taken by Lord Rosebery. The change of leadership from the House of Commons to the Lords accentuated the loss of Gladstone, and the new Government lasted only for sixteen months. At the 1895 General Election the policy of direct Labour representation which had been maintained by the Independent Labour Party was carried out on a larger scale than ever before. This resulted in 28 three-cornered contests, in all of which the new party candidates were unsuccessful, and which resulted in a number of instances of the Conservatives being returned. Six of the Liberal-Labour members lost their seats, including Sam Woods, the Secretary of the Congress, George Howell, a strong partisan of the old policy, and William Randall Cremer. A somewhat bitter reference was made to this by the President of the Congress at Cardiff, which led to a scene with Pete Curran as the defender of the new policy.

This Congress marked another stage in the development of the new movement. The adoption of new standing orders requiring that delegates should actually be engaged in work at their trade or paid officials of a Trade Union led to the exclusion of three of the leaders whose differences of opinion on policy had since 1887 provided the battle-ground of the Trade Union movement. These were James Keir Hardie and John Burns on the one side, and Henry Broadhurst on the other. As all three were outstanding members of Parliament, their exclusion from participation in the annual week's debate of the Congress did not mean that their influence and ability were lost to the working-class movement. The subsequent career of each of these men was typical of the times. Broadhurst was defeated at a subsequent election by the defection of large numbers of his labour supporters. Burns, the "Man with the Red Flag," in the course of a few years drifted into the Liberal Party and was to become, as a Liberal, the first working-class member of a British Cabinet. Keir Hardie, true to the first promise of his career, remained as the leader and inspirer of the Independent Labour Party, and became Chairman of the new Labour Party of the first decade of the twentieth century. As an attempt to exclude the new ideas from the Congress, the alteration of the Standing orders was

plainly a failure. Within four years there was a majority in the Congress for the establishment of a political organisation entirely independent of the Liberal and Conservative parties. What the move did succeed in doing was to weaken the intellectual influence of the Congress and more particularly to lower the prestige of the Parliamentary Committee.

The pathway of the new leaders was not strewn with roses, and many vicissitudes and set-backs had to be faced. The annual report of the Parliamentary Committee to the Edinburgh Congress of 1896 is especially gloomy and pessimistic :

“ The past year has almost been barren so far as progressive legislation is concerned in the direct interest of the workers. It has been usual when new Governments have come into power to expect, especially during the first year of such Government, measures of rather a startling character to be introduced in the interests of the working-class community ; but, although the present Government has been in office for 15 months, it would be difficult to point to any one really tangible and beneficial measure passed for the benefit of Labour.”

International Trade-Union action was also in an eclipse. An International Conference of Socialist and Trade-Union workers had been held in London in August, and the same report quoted above showed no great enthusiasm for international action.

“ Opinions,” it declared, “ were divided as to whether this Conference was a success or a failure. On the ground of the diversity of representation, confliction of policies, and the difficulty of language your Committee feel that this is not the place to criticise, approve, or condemn. . . . It is only fair to point out having regard to all that took place at the late Congress, and the experiences of the past, whether it would be a wise and prudent policy for the Trades Union Congress in the future to identify itself with Congresses of this character.”

The chief objection to the International Conference seems to have been the large share which the I.L.P. representatives had taken in the proceedings.

The 1896 Congress also, in effect, rescinded the Socialist resolution which Keir Hardie had carried at Norwich two years before. The comprehensive character, however, of the “anti-Socialist” resolution indicates the changing standpoint of even the older trade unionists. Two Lancashire delegates

moved, "That in the opinion of this Congress, it is essential to the maintenance of British Industries to nationalise the land, mines, minerals, royalty rents, railways, and municipalise all water, artificial light, and tramway undertakings within their several authorities, and that the Parliamentary Committee be instructed to promote and support legislation with the above object." For the resolution there voted 172 and against it 47; the minority, now led by Pete Curran, being in favour of the "nationalisation of the whole of the means of production, distribution, and exchange."

A demand was also made for a plebiscite of the trade unionists of the country on the question of a Parliamentary fund. The question it was proposed to ask was: "Are your members willing to subscribe 1*d.* per quarter to a fund for the purpose of contesting seats and supporting bona-fide Trade Unionist candidates for Parliamentary honours, pledged to neither of the old parties—Tory or Liberal?" This request was defeated by a vote of two to one, a better result, however, than had met a similar attempt by Ben Tillett some years earlier.

At this period there was evidence of the next line of attack on the Trade Union movement. A series of legal decisions had been given in the courts which threw the whole movement into confusion as to the rights which had been obtained by the great campaigns of the past. The Edinburgh Congress unanimously protested "against the recent decisions of certain judges with regard to the law relating to picketing and further pledges itself to support, morally and financially, the decision of the London Trades Council in its endeavour to ascertain definitely what is really the law upon the matter." This anti-Trade Union interpretation of the law continued till the passing of the Trades Dispute Act of 1908, marked by such notable decisions as that in the Taff Vale dispute and later by the equally famous Osborne decision dealt with in other chapters. Indirectly the campaign was a blessing in disguise. Probably nothing less than this frontal attack on the very basis of Trade Unionism would have caused the sections within the movement to ignore their differences and combine to form a powerful political force with which to win once more the right to legal combination.

The Trades Union Congresses of 1897 and 1898 show no new developments in the political field, while the industrial side of the movement was dominated and depressed by the long struggle between the engineering employers and the

Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The defeat of the latter, one of the strongest and wealthiest unions in existence, led to the effort to meet the resistance of the employers by the formation of a federation which was intended to embrace all the trade unions affiliated to the Congress. The General Federation of Trade Unions which emerged in 1899 did not get the general support that was expected by its founders. The object of the General Federation was by means of a small subscription from a very large aggregate membership to build up a reserve fund for the assistance of any of its members involved in trade disputes. So long as it confined its efforts to this system of mutual insurance of strike funds it had considerable success. When, however, the General Federation attempted to claim equality with the Congress itself as a spokesman of the whole Trade Union movement in home and international affairs, the fact that it never represented more than 30 per cent. of British Trade Unionism aroused antagonisms and led to withdrawals which weakened the Federation.

The Congress of the following year (1899) was held at Plymouth and was marked by the decision to separate another element, that of direct political representation, from the general functions of the Congress itself. The previous year, indeed, Mr. James O'Grady had suggested in his Presidential address that "a committee should be appointed to draft a scheme of political organisation for the Trade Union world, on the ground that, just as trades federation is a matter of vital necessity for industrial organisation, so also will a scheme of political action be of vital necessity, if we wish Parliament to faithfully register the effect of the industrial revolution on our social life." This suggestion crystallised into action at Plymouth. While Keir Hardie and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party, who were not actual wage earners or Trade Union officials, had been excluded from the Congress as delegates by the new Standing Orders of 1895, they still took an active part in preparations for the Congress. A resolution on Labour Representation was drawn up in the office of *The Labour Leader* and entrusted to one of the Railwaymen's delegates, Mr. James Holmes, who had taken an active part in the Taff Vale dispute. The resolution, the terms of which are given in Chapter V, was seconded by Mr. James Sexton, of the Liverpool Dockers, who described eloquently the chaos and difficulty of their divided counsels, when prominent Labour men had opposed each other on separate platforms. He was

supported by Miss Margaret Bondfield. She said they had been discussing the futility of the efforts made in the House of Commons on their behalf, and had come to the conclusion that the reason they had not been more successful was because they had not been strong enough to stand alone, and had failed to get the fulfilment of the promises made to them by the various political sections. What they wanted was a Labour represented body capable of taking its own stand on any particular question.

The opposition to the resolution was voiced on behalf of the old Trade Union leaders by Mr. Thomas Ashton, the Cotton Spinner's secretary. He argued that it was sheer waste of time to have long debates on this subject; not one Trade Unionist in 10,000 would give it a moment's notice; Trade Unionism would come to grief if it were turned into a political party. When the matter was put to a vote, however, the resolution was passed by 546,000 votes to 434,000.

If no further action had been taken, this resolution following the usual course would have been left to the Parliamentary Committee, and probably no action taken of any practical effect. The supporters, however, saw the danger and got the Congress to agree that the practical steps should be left in the hands of a special committee. Its members are named in the preceding chapter. After careful discussion in several preliminary meetings they decided to convene a general conference, and as a basis for the discussions at the Conference drew up the following resolutions :

1. *Object of Conference* : A resolution in favour of working-class opinion being represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movement.

2. *Labour Members in the House of Commons* : A resolution in favour of establishing a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who should have their own whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a willingness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency.

3. *Constitution of Committee* : The Committee shall consist of twelve representatives from Trade Unions, ten from co-operative societies, provided they are represented as a body at the conference, two from the Fabian Society, two from the I.L.P., and two from the S.D.F.

4. *Duty of Committee*: This Committee should keep in touch with Trade Unions and other organisations which are running Labour candidates.

5. *Financial responsibility*: The Committee shall administer the funds which may be received on behalf of the organisation, and each body shall be required to pay 10s. per annum for every 1,000 members or fraction thereof, also that it shall be responsible for the expenses of its own candidates.

6. *Reporting to Congress*: It should also report annually to the Trades Union Congress and the annual meetings of the national societies represented on the committee, and take any steps deemed advisable to elicit opinion from the members of organisations to which the Committee is ultimately responsible.

7. *Basis of Representation*: Societies, by whatever name they may be known, shall be entitled to one delegate for every 2,000 members or fraction thereof and they must pay 10s. for each delegate attending the conference.

8. *Voting*: The method of voting shall be by card to be issued to the delegates of trade societies according to their membership and paid for on the principle of one card for every 1,000 members.

These resolutions are given *in extenso* since this Conference laid the foundations of the Labour Party, and the original resolutions governing it became the basis of the party during the first eighteen years of its existence. The first two resolutions embody the compromise as to aims and methods between the Socialist elements on the one hand and the Trade Unionists on the other. The one definite achievement, as the next chapter will show, was the formation of an independent party. The Socialists believed that, if independence were achieved, in the nature of things the aims of the party would develop towards collectivism. How far their faith was justified remains to be told.

CHAPTER VII

THE LABOUR PARTY'S FORERUNNER

Memorial Hall Conference, 1900—Labour Representation Committee—Ramsay MacDonald as Secretary—Trade-Union Affiliations—Newcastle Conference, 1903—Resolution on Political Independence—Significant By-elections—Henderson, Shackleton, Crooks—Lib-Labs and Socialists—Salaries for Members—Parliamentary Fund—Taff Vale and the “Concordat”—General Election, 1906.

THE conflict of tendencies within the Trade Union and Socialist Movement, described in the previous chapters, was still apparent in the Conference which, in obedience to the resolution of the Trades Union Congress of 1899, met in the Memorial Hall, London, on 27th February, 1900. This momentous gathering received little attention from the newspapers, and hardly caused a ripple of excitement among the organised workers. Writing of the Conference ten years later, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald remarked of the delegates that some met “to bury the attempt in good-humoured tolerance, a few to make sure that burial would be its fate, but the majority determined to give it a chance.”¹ Some seventy organisations were represented by 129 delegates—the largest Union, and the largest delegation, being the Gas Workers and General Workers, headed by Will Thorne, whose record of continuous attendance at Labour Conferences and Trade Union Congresses is probably not equalled and is certainly not surpassed by any working-class leader. But other names still conspicuous in present-day Labour records are to be found in the list of delegates at the Memorial Hall: J. R. Clynes, Ben Tillett, James Sexton, F. W. Jowett, Philip Snowden, John Hodge, and of course, Ramsay MacDonald. The last-named exercised a profound though not generally realised influence upon the whole proceedings. His hand drafted the resolutions in which the idea of a separate independent working-class party was embodied; as he had drafted the resolution which at the Ply-

¹ *The Socialist Movement*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald, p. 235.

mouth Trades Union Congress the previous year had called the Conference into being. He was naturally and inevitably chosen as secretary of the Conference. The legend, kept alive by the Social Democratic Federation, that Mr. MacDonald was chosen in mistake for James Macdonald, the secretary of the London Trades Council and a member of the S.D.F. delegation, will not bear scrutiny. And when, on the second day, the Conference decided to appoint an executive of twelve members, with another as secretary, to control the activities of the Labour Representation Committee, it was Ramsay MacDonald who was chosen for the key appointment.

The deep and scarcely concealed antagonisms of the three groups into which the Conference was divided were revealed very early in the discussion. The proceedings opened with an unexceptionable speech from Mr. W. C. Steadman, M.P., a Radical and a Fabian, who took the chair in succession to J. T. Chandler, who, as chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, by courtesy, opened the Conference. Steadman expressed the correct opinion then expected from the moderately-advanced Trade-Union leader in declaring that every interest was represented and protected in Parliament except Labour.¹ He had, he said, believed as a Trade Unionist that the workers could attain their object in securing better conditions by voluntary efforts through their trade organisations ; but he had become convinced that “the leaders of the advanced movement who believed in political action were right and I was wrong.” So much was common ground. But there agreement ended. One group wanted representation of the workers in Parliament to be through members of the working-class only, the second group desired the Labour Candidates to include “men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movement, and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organised movements represented by the constitution which this Conference is about to frame” ; the third group wanted Labour representation to be confined to avowed Socialists who were to form a separate party “based upon a recognition of the class war, and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.”

The adoption of either the first or the third formula would

¹ The contemporary report of the Memorial Hall Conference published by the Labour Representation Committee has been followed in summarising the discussion.

have severely restricted the Committee's sphere of action, and would almost certainly have killed the Movement at the outset. The first proposal would have excluded members of the Socialist Societies who did not belong to the manual working-class ; the third would have excluded able and influential Trade-Union leaders who did not want a " party organisation separate from the capitalist parties based upon a recognition of the class war," and who had not been converted to the necessity of " socialising the means of production, distribution, and exchange." The middle way was that indicated in the draft resolutions, which took definite form in one moved by Mr. G. N. Barnes :

That this Conference is in favour of working-class opinion being represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movements, and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organised movements.

This resolution was seconded by Mr. John Burns, who declared that if the Conference proclaimed in favour of working-class candidates only it would be bad enough, but to give a definition of those working-class candidates would be infinitely worse. The resolution was carried by 102 votes to 3.

Discussion then turned to the question whether the new political movement, if it was not to have an exclusively working-class character, was to be strictly socialistic in its policy.

The issue was presented in a challenging form by James Macdonald who, on behalf of the Social Democratic Federation, proposed the following resolution :

That the representatives of the working-class movement in the House of Commons shall form there a distinct party, with a party organisation separate from the capitalist parties based upon a recognition of the class war, and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The Party shall formulate its own policy for promoting practical legislative measures in the interests of labour, and shall be prepared to co-operate with any party that will support such measures, or will assist in opposing measures of an opposite character.

To this uncompromising declaration Alex Wilkie, of the Shipwrights, moved an amendment proposing that a Labour

programme of five or six points should be framed in agreement with the desires of the majority of the workers of the country, and that Labour Candidates should be pledged to act together in support of these points ; and also to co-operate with any party which for the time being might promote legislation in the direct interest of labour, or to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures which would be detrimental to labour : but on all purely political questions, the Wilkie amendment proposed to leave the Labour representative entirely free.

This amendment embodied the "Lib-Lab" point of view. It was argued that it would be a mistake to attempt to bind the Labour Members on other than purely labour questions. The thorough-going Socialists of the S.D.F. insisted, on the other hand, that Socialism and the class war must differentiate the new party from the existing parties ; and it was not obscurely hinted that those who objected to the S.D.F. resolution did so because they wanted to obtain Liberal votes in order to enter Parliament. Nevertheless, by 59 votes to 85, the amendment of the "Lib-Lab" element in the Conference was preferred to the S.D.F. declaration of faith, and the discussion thereupon turned upon the issue left obscure in the amendment—whether there was indeed to be a separate and distinct Labour Party, or merely a group of Labour Members who would on certain specified questions act together, but on all other questions might take their own line. The amendment, which had become the substantive resolution before the Conference, was certainly ambiguous to this extent, and it did not satisfy the main body of opinion in the gathering, which wanted to create a new political party for practical political purposes and not merely for propagandist ends. Accordingly, Keir Hardie, in the name of the Independent Labour Party, moved as a further amendment :

That this Conference is in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own Whips, and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which for the time being may be engaged in promoting legislation in the interest of Labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency ; and, further, members of the Labour Group shall not oppose any candidates whose candidature is being promoted in terms of Resolution 1.

The intention of the last clause in this amendment is obvious; it was intended to prevent, though it did not altogether succeed in preventing, Trade Unionists opposing Socialists, and Socialists opposing Trade Unionists, at election times. As Hardie pointed out, it left each of the affiliated organisations free to choose its own candidates without exposing them to the risk and humiliation of being opposed by candidates chosen by other affiliated bodies, or of leading members of those bodies supporting Liberal or even Tory candidates against them. The one condition was, not absolute identity of views in regard to economic doctrine, such as the S.D.F. proposed, neither was it a binding agreement to act together on four or five specific questions such as the Trade-Unionist wing suggested; the condition was a definite obligation that when returned to Parliament every candidate should agree to form one of the Labour Group there, and act in harmony with its decisions. This amendment was seconded by G. J. Wardle on behalf of the Railway Servants, and Mr. Wilkie withdrew his motion; but, although it was eventually carried unanimously, the Conference was reminded by John Burns, speaking in its support, that it might cause difficulties. He pointed out that there was already a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, definitely organised, with its own Whips; and he warned the Conference against "too much dictation," remarking that the Labour Party was not united on all questions—there was, for example, the Miners' Eight Hours Bill. Three Labour Members in the House, on the following day would, he said, vote against this Bill, and two Labour Members would support it. But he did not think the three men who voted against the Bill could be excluded from the counsels of Labour: they were men of capacity, ability, and character.

As we shall presently see, the conflict foreshadowed by Mr. Burns had to be fought out. But for the moment the Conference was satisfied to lay down the conditions upon which the new Party was to come into existence. There cannot be any reasonable doubt that its creators acted wisely in rejecting the rigid doctrinaire proposals of the S.D.F., and in refusing to be held back by the timid section of the Trade Unionists who still yearned for the smiles of the Liberal Party.

The Executive Committee elected at the Memorial Hall Conference consisted of twelve members, seven representing the affiliated Trade Unions: Frederick Rogers (Vellum Bookbinders), Thomas Greenall (Lancashire Miners), Richard Bell

(Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants), Pete Curran (Gasworkers and General Labourers), Allen Gee (Yorkshire Textile Workers), Alex Wilkie (Shipwrights), and John Hodge (British Steel Smelters); two from the Independent Labour Party: J. Keir Hardie and James Parker; two from the Social Democratic Federation: James Macdonald and Harry Quelch; and one Fabian, Edward R. Pease; with Ramsay MacDonald as Secretary and part of a room in his flat at 3, Lincoln's Inn Fields as offices.

The first Chairman of the Labour Representation Committee, Frederick Rogers, was a very notable character in more than one field of activity. Born in Whitechapel in 1846, of working-class parents, he served his apprenticeship to the vellum bookbinding, and later as a journeyman was active in the Trade Union that governed the conditions of the craft up to its absorption in the amalgamation that now covers the Printing and Paper Trades. Largely influenced by Kingsley and Maurice, and the Christian Socialists, he carried into the nineteenth century the ideas and conduct of the working-class churchmen who figured in the Radical Movement of the 'sixties and 'seventies. A finely-built, vigorous figure, with very decided opinions and a fluency and fearlessness in their expression, he was a popular speaker on religion, politics, and literature. There were very few Elizabethan scholars of greater attainments in his day, and among other phases of his work, which he frequently recalled with no little satisfaction, was his various associations with Sir Henry Irving in that actor's later Shakespearean productions. Full of pride in his own handicraft of vellum binding, Ruskin's teachings had impressed his mind in many ways. He found immense pleasure in European travel, undertaken as a result of careful economies achieved by frugal living, and in particular revelled in Continental art and architecture and the works of the mediæval painters and builders.

The Victorian poets were familiar in his range and of them all Browning was the chief. He was a pioneer of the University Extension Movement, and in his later years lived in the Walworth area and through his association with Herbert Stead in the Browning Settlement was a great power for good, intellectually and spiritually, to the serious-minded workmen who found the Settlement a gleaming beacon in the drab life of South-East London. Rogers was also a familiar figure at Toynbee Hall, where he shared with Canon Barnett the ideals

and aspirations and the day-by-day faith and conduct of the practical Christian. He it was who, early in the century, took in hand the concrete organisation of public opinion in favour of Old Age Pensions. He travelled the country from end to end, addressing meetings and conferences, arousing interest in all sorts of circles—political, industrial, religious, literary—and by voice and pen achieved all that one man could do to bring the Labour Movement's demand for Old Age Pensions on a non-contributory basis to a successful issue.

He was frequently a delegate for his Trade Society to the Trades Union Congress, and although his direct connection with the newer Labour Movement was of a comparatively short duration, his virile, forceful personality was constantly exerted for the advancing of working-class standards in every possible direction.

He died during the Great War, largely as the result of chills contracted during tours he undertook to appeal for men from the stages of London and provincial theatres by the recital of the more patriotic passages of Shakespeare's historical dramas, an accomplishment in which he excelled.

Close upon the formation of the new Movement came the South African War and rendered its task immensely difficult. The bulk of the Socialists and official Trade Unionists were opposed to the war and with the Radicals formed a barrier to the crude Jingoism of the Conservatives and the more restrained Imperialism of the Asquithian Liberals. It was a toughening experience and served to blur the sharp asperities that characterised too many of the relationships between the more stolid of the Trade Unionists and the more advanced and daring of the Socialists. John Burns' share in the agitation against the war was considerable, but it was conducted alongside more constructive effort with the Progressive Party on the London County Council. There had been a general expectancy that Burns would find his place in the new Movement, but personal antipathies and a curious incapacity for real team work led him to forsake the opportunity that lay to his hand, and he gave to London the service that he might have devoted to the National Labour Movement. There was no Labour rival on the L.C.C. and he figured all the more prominently at Spring Gardens. At Westminster, however, Hardie was a doughty rival with fixed notions as to the lines of Labour's advance, controlling a newspaper with a growing circulation, and possessing a consuming energy that led him

from one corner of the kingdom to the other, spreading the new gospel and leaving behind an ever-increasing number of local I.L.P. organisations, which, in turn, were stimulating local Trade Union branches into industrial and political activity and making things uncomfortable for Tories and Liberals alike.

The Khaki Election of 1900 caught the newly-formed L.R.C. in its infancy, and only 15 candidates were able to run under its auspices, Burns not being of the number. Only two, Richard Bell and Keir Hardie, were returned, the former for Derby and the latter for Merthyr. Hardie's fight was novel and notable as he unsuccessfully contested Preston simultaneously with the Welsh borough. It may be remarked that 10 of the 15 Labour Candidates ultimately found their way to the House of Commons.

Following the 1900 Election ensued the struggle to ensure the Party's independence. Richard Bell, the Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, had been a good Liberal, but entertained a more than mild distrust of the I.L.P., and the chances of real co-operation with Hardie in Parliament were as dim as events proved them to be. It is evident, however, that the one element of attraction about the new Movement was this very independence of the older Parties, and the task of educating the masses to work out their own economic and political salvation. The Radicals who sought to keep contact with and render support to the Liberal Party were fighting a losing contest, though the Miners, not yet affiliated with the L.R.C., kept their own faith.

The uncertainties of some of the L.R.C.'s supporters in this respect and in particular the attitude of Richard Bell while Chairman of the Committee in 1902, led to a final decision on the issue at the Newcastle Conference in February, 1903. J. N. Bell, of Newcastle (Secretary to the National Amalgamated Union of Labour—since merged with the Gasworkers' Union in the National Union of General Workers) presided, and in the course of his address emphasised the policy of building steadily on independent lines as against the prospect of compromise that was alluring the minds of a section of the Movement. A re-drafted constitution was submitted which was strengthened by amendments more clearly defining the Movement's independence. The case against the new policy was argued by Richard Bell, W. E. Clery, and John Ward, the latter expressing the view that "they wanted to get their feet

well planted in the House of Commons and he believed they should not be a bit particular about the way in which they did it." Hardie, Sexton, Curran, Tillett, Summerbell, all fought this opportunism, and ultimately Clause II of the new Constitution was adopted in the following terms :

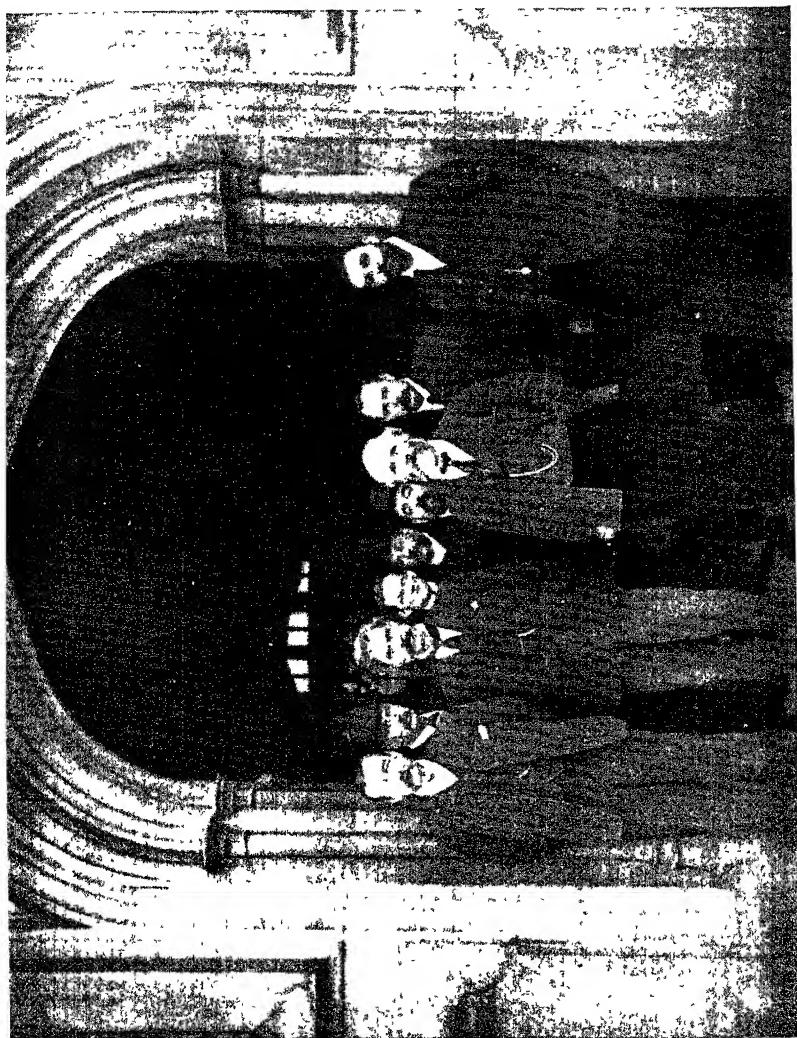
To secure, by united action, the election to Parliament of Candidates promoted, in the first instance, by an affiliated Society or Societies in the constituency, who undertake to form or join a distinct group in Parliament, with its own Whips and its own policy on Labour questions, to abstain strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties, and not to oppose any other candidate recognised by this Committee. All such candidates shall pledge themselves to accept this Constitution, to abide by the decisions of the Group in carrying out the aims of this Constitution or resign, and to appear before their constituencies under the title of Labour candidates only.

This settled the question. Henceforward the independence of the new Movement was recognised and history has more than ever justified the prescience of the men who fought for it.

The Newcastle Conference was also notable in its institution of a Fund for the Maintenance of Labour Members in the House of Commons and for assisting in paying election expenses. Contributions were fixed at the modest sum of one penny per affiliated member per annum ; no payments were to be made until the accumulated fund reached £2,500, when all members elected under L.R.C. auspices were to receive maintenance at the rate of £200 per annum, and 25 per cent. of the Returning Officer's expenses paid by L.R.C. candidates was also to be met from the Fund.

This further evidence of the new Movement meaning serious business also served to strengthen its influence among the rank and file of the Trade Unions, and by the time the first maintenance grants were made, in 1904, the Party had succeeded in securing the election of David Shackleton, Will Crooks, and Arthur Henderson, who, with Keir Hardie, formed the group up to the Election of 1906. The Fund was kept in being with fluctuating rates of contributions until payment of Members was provided by the State in 1911.

The three successfully contested by-elections referred to above were of unusual interest and importance, marking as



EARLY DAYS - LABOUR LEADERS AT THE HOUSE IN 1906.

Front Row, left to right: Arthur Henderson, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Ken Hardie, D. J. Shackleton.

Back Row: G. H. Barnes, Philip Snowden, John Hodge, Will Crookes, J. O'Grady.

they did the first portents of the political revolution that the coming of the Labour Party initiated.

In 1902, Robert Smillie had fought one of his earliest unsuccessful propaganda fights in N.W. Lanark, under the auspices of the Scottish Parliamentary Workers' Committee, and in the same year Harry Quelch, who represented the Social Democratic Federation on the L.R.C. Executive Committee, fought Dewsbury as an unofficial candidate, the controversy arising therefrom being followed by the Federation's secession.

The Taff Vale Judgment was given by the House of Lords in the same year, and its full import as a means of effectively crippling the Trade Unions was clearly in the minds of officials and rank and file alike. It was evident that this "judge-made law" could only be rectified by legislation, and it is true to say that no single factor contributed so much to the early upbuilding of the political Labour Movement. The United Textile Factory Workers, representing practically the whole of the cotton workers of Lancashire, affiliated almost immediately, and upon the elevation of Sir U. Kaye Shuttleworth to the peerage creating a vacancy in the Clitheroe Division, the active Socialists and L.R.C. supporters in this textile constituency were anxious to adopt Philip Snowden — then a rising orator in the Movement, and fresh from a vigorous by-election fight at Wakefield, where as an I.L.P. candidate he had polled 1,979 votes against 2,960 votes cast for a Conservative opponent. However, they were prevailed upon to concentrate upon the candidature of David Shackleton, of the Darwen Weavers. Shackleton, a burly, genial giant of a man, had centred his activities upon the Textile Trade Union Movement with which he was associated, and although almost unknown at the time in the larger Labour world, he was a force to be reckoned with in his own industry and in his own county. Well over six feet high, his frequent appeals for the abolition of the half-time system were always in a measure amusingly discounted by his own robust physique as an example of what a half-timer might become. Perhaps the most illuminating light that has ever been shed on David Shackleton was his own testimony to the daily perusal of the *Manchester Guardian* as the main source of his literary and general knowledge. Shackleton was returned unopposed, the older political parties showing no anxiety to combat the nominee of the new and almost unknown Movement, more particularly when he was

so popular a figure in the constituency. Shackleton immediately became a force in the House of Commons, his amiable suavity and quiet reasonableness, coupled with his commanding presence, proving a useful foil to the more romantic figure of Keir Hardie. In the later fights for the Trade Union Act of 1906, reversing the Taff Vale Judgment, he was most prominent, though at the outset of the campaign, like many other Trade Union officials of national rank, he had opposed the policy promoted by MacDonald in favour of the Judgment's complete reversal, a policy that was subsequently triumphant. Shackleton served as Chairman of the Parliamentary Party in 1907, and also figured in the Parliamentary encounters to reverse the Osborne Judgment during 1912, but to the surprise of his colleagues, just as he was at the height of his influence, following the earlier example of Richard Bell, he accepted a Government post as Labour Adviser. He subsequently received a knighthood, and later became Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, where he keeps contact with Trade Union colleagues in a purely official capacity.

Early in 1903 a vacancy arose in Woolwich, where the local Labour forces six months earlier had determined to adopt an L.R.C. candidate whenever opportunity offered. Will Crooks was then an active figure in the local politics of East London, where the Poplar Labour League had raised funds to maintain him as a full-time representative on the local Council and the Board of Guardians, and it was Crooks that the Woolwich Trades Council persuaded to cross the river and contest the seat against Geoffrey Drage, a young Unionist with an academic interest in industrial affairs. It was a wonderful fight, the Radical press of London, then a great force in both London and national politics, embracing as it did the *Daily News*, the *Morning Leader*, and the *Daily Chronicle* each morning as well as the *Echo*, the *Star*, and the *Sun* in the evening, giving a solid backing to Crooks' campaign. A popular candidate, Cockney of the Cockneys, with a genius for pathos and humour quite unequalled in his time or since, Crooks swept the Woolwich workmen off their feet, and, with the aid of fine electoral organisation, won handsomely by 8,687 votes to 5,458. Crooks' subsequent career in and out of Parliament has been ably told by George Haw, under the title of *From the Workhouse to Westminster*. He seized the imagination of the House of Commons at once and his homely stories of working-class life as he experienced it were an im-

mense influence whether they were related in Parliament or on the platforms in the country. His reply to Lord Hugh Cecil when the Unemployed Workmen Bill was under discussion in 1905, was a classic example of working-class experience correcting aristocratic pretensions.

In April of the same year John Hodge contested a five-days' by-election contest at Preston, where, though the Conservative candidate defeated him by 8,639 to 6,490, he united the local Labour forces under the new flag and laid the foundations for the victory of 1906 and those which have been achieved in successive elections ever since. The new Movement had no more loyal or keener supporter than Hodge, and he left no effort untried to bring his Union—the British Steel Smelters—into the very van of Labour progress. He had initiated the Union himself, while working as an iron puddler at Motherwell, and against the opposition of older types of Trade Unionism in the industry, succeeded in building up one of the strongest of industrial organisations. Always exercising a controlling hand and a shrewd mind, he steadily enlisted the services of younger capable men. Despite differences with colleagues, throughout his active political and Trade Union career—he won Gorton in 1900, and sat continually for it until his retirement in 1923—he remained loyal to the party and sought to strengthen its enterprises. He entered the Coalition Ministry during the war and rendered good service as the first Minister of Labour and afterwards at the Ministry of Pensions.

On 15th May, 1903, the political world was thrown into a ferment by Joseph Chamberlain abandoning the Free Trade policy and advocating a system of Colonial Preference. The Tariff Reform League was formed at Birmingham on 13th July, for the purpose of developing the Tariff Campaign, and on the 25th the new Labour Movement fought the first election on the new issue, when Arthur Henderson was elected for Barnard Castle in a three-cornered contest, polling 3,370 votes as against the Unionist's 3,323 and the Liberal's 2,809.

Another by-election fraught with serious significance to the young and uncertain Movement took place at Norwich, in December, 1903. The Local Trades Council put forward George H. Roberts, then a young working compositor, active in local affairs. He was opposed by candidates of the older parties and was soundly defeated, the Liberal polling 8,576 votes, the Conservative 6,756, and Roberts 2,440. The inci-

dent which led to considerable controversy in L.R.C. counsels was the writing of a letter by Richard Bell antagonistic to the Labour candidate and following it with a telegram of congratulation to the new Liberal Member. This breach of the new party's Constitution led to heated exchanges at the ensuing Bradford Conference, when the strictures of the Executive Committee were endorsed. This ended Richard Bell's short association with the L.R.C. ; thereafter his political activities lay with the Liberal-Labour Group, until, in 1910, he relinquished political for official life at the Board of Trade and his seat at Derby reverted to James H. Thomas, his erstwhile colleague of the Railway Servants.

The early Conferences of the Movement were much concerned with amendments to the Party Constitution, but the general tendency was all in the direction of confirming and emphasising the principle of independence. Attempts were made on various occasions to secure the adoption of a Party Programme, but without success, and similar moves in favour of a purely Socialist basis met with failure. Early in its deliberations the Conference adopted resolutions demanding equality of suffrage for men and women alike and there is satisfaction in recording the fact that on every occasion the Labour Party has stood for this principle, and many of its more prominent supporters were active associates in the various Women's Suffrage Societies.

The need of a party press organ was realised at an early stage in L.R.C. history, but it was many years before ways and means were found to launch the *Daily Citizen*, which, after a somewhat troubrous career, died an early victim of war prices. The history of the *Daily Herald*, started independently of the National Movement about the same time, has been detailed elsewhere, but it was not until 1923 that that journal became the absolute property of the two National Committees controlling the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party.

The Party took an active part in the Free Trade campaign that preceded the General Election of 1906, but from the outset made it quite clear that from the Labour point of view fiscal doctrines, Free Trade or Protectionist, left the more pressing social and industrial problems unsolved. Throughout each successive contest on this issue, the Movement as a whole has adhered to Free Trade as a logical and national accompaniment of its general international policy, but has

always sought, even in its earliest pronouncements, to distinguish its policy from the ordinary orthodox Free Trade economics by a steady adherence to demands for national reconstruction and control of industry on socialistic lines as the only method of satisfactorily solving the problems of work and wages that beset all capitalist States.

The Movement has always been quick to respond to the international appeal and early in its history associated with the International Socialist Bureau, more familiarly known in later days as the "Second International." Its affiliation was consistently opposed by the Social Democratic Federation on the grounds that the principle of the "class struggle" was not recognised in the party constitution. Ultimately, after considerable discussions at International Conferences, by a formula framed by Karl Kautsky, it was authoritatively declared that

the English Labour Party is to be admitted to the International Socialist Congress because, although it does not avowedly recognise the class struggle, it actually carries it on; and because the organisation of the Labour Party being independent of the bourgeois parties is based upon the class struggle.

There is a certain interest in noting that when in session at Liverpool in January, 1905, the news of the massacre of Russian workers before the Winter Palace of the Czar at St. Petersburg was reported to the Conference, a resolution of protest was immediately adopted and a fund to aid the dependants of the victims was initiated. Nearly £1,000 was raised in a short time and distributed through the machinery of various Russian Reform organisations then with headquarters at Geneva and Paris. Among others from whom letters of thanks and gratitude were received were Prince Kropotkin and Felix Volhovsky, then active participants in Russian working-class movements, and Vladimir Oulianoff, at that time editor of *Vperiod* in Geneva, but in later years to become more familiar in world history as Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution.

In the early years of the Movement difficulties were constantly arising from the overlapping of functions between the Executive Committee of the L.R.C., the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, whose objects still remained largely of a political character despite the formation

of the newer body charged with specific political work, and the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trade Unions, which, in addition to its own particular industrial duties, was prone to issue frequent pronouncements on current affairs, both national and international. It was the practice of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress to issue their approval of all candidates who were Trade Unionists, irrespective of their political associations. In 1905 it became evident that unless some common purpose was achieved, Labour Candidates endorsed by the L.R.C. on the one hand and those promoted by unaffiliated organisations, such as the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, on the other, would find themselves facing the constituencies with an unnecessarily divided and varied front. Accordingly, consultations between the three Committees were held with a view to securing some sort of harmony, and ultimately the following Concordat was adopted :

I. All candidates adopted by the Labour Representation Committee under its constitution shall receive the loyal and hearty support of all sections of the Labour Party.

II. All Labour and Trade Union candidates approved by the Parliamentary Committee, in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Trades Union Congress, shall receive the support of the L.R.C. in so far as its constitution allows, and in the same manner as Mr. T. Richards, in West Monmouth.¹

III. Members of the Labour Representation Committee shall not be considered disloyal in refusing to support any Labour candidate adopted on any party platform except that of Labour, and, further, that the candidates approved by the Committee represented here to-day shall offer no opposition to each other.

IV. That the Labour Representation Committee make it clear that their national constitution does not require abstention on the part of electors in constituencies where no Labour candidate is running.

Later, further consultation took place which led to the formation of the National Joint Board, composed of represen-

¹ Mr. Tom Richards had successfully fought a by-election at West Monmouth as a nominee of the South Wales Miners, endorsed by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. The Miners had not yet affiliated to the L.R.C., but friendly support was given to the candidature by L.R.C. speakers and by the circulation of L.R.C. literature.

tatives from each of the three Committees, and which served for many years as a co-ordinating influence and an authoritative voice for the Movement in both its industrial and political activities.

The L.R.C. thus entered the Election of 1906 in a much readier state of preparedness than it did in the Khaki Election six years earlier. Of its 50 candidates the following 29 were returned and formed a compact Parliamentary Party wielding considerably greater influence in the House of Commons than its mere numerical strength justified :

| <i>Members</i> | <i>Societies</i> | <i>Constituencies</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| G. N. Barnes | A. S. Engineers | Blackfriars. |
| C. W. Bowerman | London Society of Compositors | Deptford. |
| J. R. Clynes | Gasworkers | Manchester, N.E. |
| Will Crooks | Coopers | Woolwich. |
| Chas. Duncan | A. S. Engineers | Barrow-in-Furness. |
| A. H. Gill | Textile Workers | Bolton. |
| T. Glover | Miners (Lancs) | St. Helens. |
| J. Keir Hardie | I.L.P. | Merthyr Tydfil. |
| A. Henderson | Ironfounders | Barnard Castle. |
| John Hodge | Steelsmelters | Gorton. |
| W. Hudson | A. S. Railway Servants | Newcastle-on-Tyne. |
| J. Jenkins | Shipwrights | Chatham. |
| F. W. Jewett | I.L.P. | Bradford West. |
| Geo. D. Kelley | Lithographers | Manchester, S.W. |
| J. Ramsay MacDonald | I.L.P. | Leicester. |
| J. T. Macpherson | Steelsmelters | Preston. |
| Jas. O'Grady | Furnishing Trades | Leeds East. |
| J. Parker | I.L.P. | Halifax. |
| T. F. Richards | Boot and Shoe Operatives | Wolverhampton, W. |
| G. H. Roberts | Typographical Association | Norwich. |
| J. A. Seddon | Shop Assistants | Newton. |
| Philip Snowden | I.L.P. | Blackburn. |
| T. Summerbell | I.L.P. | Sunderland. |
| J. W. Taylor ¹ | Colliery Enginemen | Chester-le-Street. |
| Will Thorne | Gasworkers | West Ham, S. |
| Stephen Walsh | Miners (Lancs) | Ince. |
| Geo. J. Wardle | A. S. Railway Servants | Stockport. |
| Alex Wilkie | Shipwrights | Dundee. |
| W. Tyson Wilson | Carpenters and Joiners | Westhoughton. |

In addition, the following Labour Members, returned under auspices other than those of the L.R.C., continued to form a "Trade Union Group." The Group consisted in the main of Liberals, most owing allegiance to local Liberal Associations, but in many instances—the Mining Members in

¹ J. W. Taylor joined the party subsequent to the election.

particular—dependent upon their Trade Unions for their election expenses and maintenance:

| <i>Members</i> | <i>Societies</i> | <i>Constituencies</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| W. Abraham . | Miners | Rhondda. |
| Richard Bell . | A. S. Railway Servants | Derby. |
| W. Brace . | Miners | Glamorgan, S. |
| H. Broadhurst . | Stonemasons | Leicester. |
| T. Burt . | Miners | Morpeth. |
| W. R. Cremer . | Carpenters and Joiners | Haggerston. |
| Enoch Edwards . | Miners | Hanley. |
| Chas. Fenwick . | Miners | Wansbeck. |
| Fred Hall . | Miners | Normanton. |
| J. Haslam . | Miners | Chesterfield. |
| John Johnson . | Miners | Gateshead. |
| W. Johnson . | Miners | Nuneaton. |
| Fred. Maddison . | Typographical Association | Burnley. |
| George Nicholls . | Agricultural Labourers | Northants, N. |
| Tom Richards . | Miners | Monmouth, W. |
| W. C. Steadman . | Bargebuilders | Stepney. |
| H. Vivian . | Carpenters and Joiners | Birkenhead. |
| John Ward . | Navvies | Stoke. |
| John Wadsworth . | Miners | Hallamshire. |
| John Williams . | Miners | Gower. |
| John Wilson . | Miners | Durham. |
| J. Havelock Wilson . | Sailors and Firemen | Middlesbrough. |

During the Parliamentary negotiations preceding the passage of the Trade Union Bill in 1906, there were frequent consultations between the two Parliamentary Groups, but when the Miners' Federation affiliated as a body in 1910 the necessity for a separate Trade Union Group disappeared and the Labour Party became the one recognised political expression of the Movement both in Parliament and in the country, though one or two individual M.P.'s.—Thomas Burt, Charles Fenwick, and John Ward, for example—continued a policy of isolation and figured as "Independent" candidates at elections, though accepting the "whips" of the Liberal Party.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOUR IN PARLIAMENT

Position before 1900—Independence comes—Initial Difficulties—Increases in Strength—The Bell Episode—1906 Election—Effect on Nation—Change of Title—Officers and Personnel of New Party—Success in Debate—Agreement with Trade-Union Group—Effect on Liberals—Effect on Legislation—Miners come in—By-elections—Lords *v.* People—Elections 1910 and after—Disappointment of Extremists.

THE closing decades of the nineteenth century saw the outposts of class prejudice carried and working-class representatives definitely established as members of the House of Commons. But, as previous chapters show, with the exception of a brief appearance by Keir Hardie, who won West Ham in 1893 and shook the citadels of respectability by turning up in a cloth cap, all these were men more concerned to win and hold a right for their class than to blaze a trail for a new party. Convinced that an independent party was unnecessary as a means, undesirable as an end, and impossible in action—were not the division lobbies *two* in number, “aye” and “no”?—they quite simply believed their interests as a class to be identical with those of the Liberal Party and saw no valid reasons why they should not support it. For them Gladstonian Liberalism was as the light that shone on Sinai and the banners of progress indistinguishable from the banners of *laissez-faire*. So, though they were labour men, they were not Labour in the sense in which the word is politically understood to-day; and their actions in the House must not be confused with those of the independent group, with whose progress in Parliament it is the purpose of this chapter primarily to deal. Nevertheless, the present-day Movement owes the old Liberal-Labour group a debt of gratitude: for, essential in their time and place, they not only helped to popularise the idea of direct working-class representation, but bore living, though unconscious witness, to the real need for an independent party in the House.

Labour representation as a new force, free and independent of all other parties in Parliament, began in 1900. In that year, as has already been stated, the Labour Representation Committee was formed.

The Labour Representation Committee differed from its predecessors, the Labour Representation League and the Labour Electoral Association, in that it was definitely a move to create an independent party in the House with its own whips and its own policy. The League had owed its existence to the activities of the London Working-men's Association—a Radical body; and the Electoral Association had been a Radical organisation openly and unashamed. The Labour Representation Committee on the other hand quite early made it a constitutional offence for any of its parliamentary members to identify themselves with or to promote "the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties." In framing this rule the Committee clearly went beyond the intention of its original conveners, for there is no doubt that the Trades Union Congress when it decided to set up the L.R.C. had nothing so drastic in mind. Happily, by this time the Committee was beyond Congress control, having been separated from it soon after it was born, otherwise its history might have been the same as its forerunners; its fate an early and inglorious death.

The times in which the Labour Representation Committee was launched could hardly have been less propitious than they were for so seemingly desperate an adventure. The country was in the throes of the Boer War, and unthinking patriotism ran riot through the constituencies. In addition, the Government seized the opportunity the war-fever afforded them to snatch a further term of office and appealed to the electorate shortly after the setting-up of the Committee and before it had had time adequately to prepare. Under the circumstances the Committee did what it could, and, though its hope of running 22 candidates did not materialise, it managed to get 15 candidates to the poll in as many constituencies and had the satisfaction of seeing two of them—Richard Bell (Derby) and Keir Hardie (Merthyr)—returned. It is noteworthy that these two were the only purely Labour victories won at this election, though the Liberal-Labour group, running as Liberals, returned 8 men as against 12 to the 1895 Parliament. Amongst the unsuccessful candidates run under the auspices of the Committee appear the names of J. Ramsay

MacDonald, Philip Snowden, F. W. Jowett, George Lansbury, and Will Thorne. All the seats fought were urban, the most rural being that of the Gower division of Glamorgan, contested by John Hodge, who polled nearly 4,000 votes. The total poll in the 15 constituencies was 62,698 : an increase on 1895 when the advance wing (fighting as I.L.P. or S.D.F. candidates) polled 50,000 votes between them without getting a single man returned.

In the by-elections which occurred in the subsequent five years the Committee, choosing its ground, did well. It contested five seats ; won two and got, in addition, one of its men (David Shackleton) returned unopposed (for Clitheroe). A year later Will Crooks won Woolwich and Arthur Henderson Barnard Castle, under the Committee's auspices. These victories brought the independent group in the House up to five, soon, however, to be reduced to four by the defection of Richard Bell to the Liberals in 1904. Mr. Bell was then secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (now the National Union of Railwaymen), the union which had moved the resolution at Congress which brought the L.R.C. into being and the union which had borne the brunt of the current attacks upon trade unionism. He was also a member of the I.L.P., a Socialist organisation with a programme much in advance of that of the L.R.C. Further he had been the Committee's first Treasurer and its Chairman during 1902-3. Yet in spite of such close associations with the movement, he, like John Burns, had, apparently, little faith in it or desire to see it succeed. His break with it followed a congratulatory telegram sent by him to the successful Liberal who had fought a Committee candidate in a by-election at Norwich.

It cannot be said that the advent of the four Independents in the House aroused much interest in the country or great fear in the ranks of the two older parties. Nor can it be said that this meagre group had any marked effect upon the legislation of these years. The reports, submitted by the Executive of the Labour Representation Committee to its annual conferences up to 1905, make practically no reference to parliamentary activities and record no successes. The group in Parliament concentrated principally upon the question of unemployment, a subject Keir Hardie had made peculiarly his own. With the cessation of hostilities in South Africa the unemployment figures began steadily to rise, and

this problem, and the agitation in favour of the provision of meals for school children at the public expense, were subjects which occupied attention and led to the holding of a special conference. Before we pass on it should be said in fairness to the Government of the day that it did place upon the Statute Book an Unemployed Workmen's Act which, though it did not satisfy the Labour group, was recognised as a beginning. To what extent this Act was due to "the shadow" of Labour "across the floor" of St. Stephen's it is difficult to estimate.

As has been said, the beginnings of the movement towards independence were overshadowed in the public eye by the Boer War. Soon after its close the country was plunged into the bitter controversy that raged round Joseph Chamberlain's tariff proposals. True the Taff Vale judgment (dealt with in detail in a subsequent chapter) drew attention momentarily to the political Labour Movement, but, except for class-conscious Trade Unionists and the members of the L.R.C., this decision had little significance. It certainly caused the Conservatives no tremors, for the Government moved steadily through the intervening years to the election of 1906 without attempting to placate in any way the working-class movement. Nor was the Liberal Party, rallying from defeat to victory under the genial hand of Campbell Bannerman, any more aware of the growing momentum inherent in the independent group. It still believed that it could at will rally the advance wing to its side, as it had often done before, by the simple process of including a "Labour" man in the incoming administration. What Campbell Bannerman failed to realise was that in offering John Burns the Local Government Board he was doing no more than allocate office to one of his own side, lock, stock, and barrel. Burns was no longer representative of, or, even, in sympathy with, the new spirit that animated the Labour Movement.

Though the Committee had been caught at a disadvantage in the election of 1900 it took care not to be so caught in the election of 1906. If it had little to show as a result of its activities in Parliament it had a great deal to show as a result of its activities outside. Its work in the constituencies had been sure and unceasing: as far as its financial resources would permit it had left no stone unturned in its efforts, not only to place as many candidates as possible in the field, but to ensure their election when placed. It ran 50 candidates,

secured the return of 29 of them (shortly after increased to 30), polled an increased vote of a quarter of a million which, in all, represented 37 per cent. of the total votes cast in the divisions contested.

Little wonder, therefore, that, at the Conference held just after the election, in the same Hall that had seen its formation six years previously, the Executive were able joyfully to report the result as "highly satisfactory." "Suddenly," says the Report, "politicians of all parties realise that a new factor in politics has appeared; that organised labour as a political force is already a menace to the easy-going gentlemen of the old school, who have slumbered for so long on the green benches of St. Stephen's. Everybody is asking 'What does it mean?'" The concluding query in this quotation was no rhetorical flourish. The sudden rise of the Party excited the utmost interest and, literally, everywhere men discussed its meaning, asking not only "What does it mean?" but also "What does it want?" It was at this Conference that the Committee changed its name to the Labour Party, the title by which it is now so widely known, and under which it has won through to world-wide recognition.

Of the 30 members, who now found themselves working together under the fierce glare of publicity their sudden appearance had excited, 26 were men without previous experience of Parliamentary rules. Among them, entering Parliament for the first time, were Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, J. R. Clynes, F. W. Jowett, and Stephen Walsh, all of whom were to find places in Labour's first cabinet, eighteen years later.

The party took itself seriously and proceeded to organise on proper lines. A room was secured at the House for the party's exclusive use; Whips and other officers were elected and clerical assistance engaged. Hardie was appointed chairman and named two parliamentary private secretaries (unpaid) in due form. The officers met daily, and the party weekly, to discuss the business before the House; to allocate speakers for the debates; and to receive reports from the various party committees set up to deal with parliamentary activity in its different phases. The party laboured under several disadvantages not shared by the majority of the House. Many of its members had heavy duties to perform as Trade-Union officials and all were in constant demand for propaganda work in the constituencies. In spite of these drawbacks,

added, it must be remembered, to the initial one of unfamiliarity with House of Commons procedure under which four-fifths of the members suffered, the party record for the first session was an excellent one to which "friend and opponent alike" bore "testimony."¹

A successful attempt was made to secure the co-operation of the Trade-Union group (Liberal-Labour) on all matters coming up essential to working-class interests. It was urged that as far as possible the Trade-Union group should support the Labour Party, which, in return, agreed to support Trades Union Congress candidates as far as its Constitution permitted. The two sections further decided not to fight each other in the constituencies. "The Labour Party, however, made it clear that it would not support the Trade-Union group on other than Labour platforms."

This compact was viewed with deep misgivings by the Liberal Party managers, who did what they could to prevent it. The following is a copy of a letter sent to all Liberal-Labour members on 6th March, 1906. It is worth quoting in full for the evidence it affords that the Liberal Party was at last fully alive to the threat to its future in the new tendency towards independence.

PROPOSED NATIONAL LIBERAL-LABOUR LEAGUE

DEAR SIR,

The opinion has been freely expressed to me by Liberal leaders (who have promised considerable financial support) that a separate organisation should be formed to represent the views of the Liberal-Labour members of Parliament and to secure a substantial increase in their numbers at the next General Election.

It is thought that a Labour Party within the Liberal Party will be a source of great strength to both, and I am requested to ask your views thereon as a Labour M.P.

Will you please be good enough to send me a reply with suggestions, during the week, so that steps may be taken to call an early meeting?

The letter was signed by Mr. Bankes, Liberal agent for Westminster, who added a note to the effect that the letter was not being circulated to the 29 Labour M.P.s pledged to the L.R.C. programme. The proposal never came to anything,

¹ Hardie in his report to the 7th Annual Conference held at Belfast, January, 1907.

in spite of the bait of considerable financial support, and the League was not formed. Apparently the Trade-Union members were not unfamiliar with the fable of the wolf and the lamb nor totally lacking in a sense of humour : knowing their more advanced colleagues as they did, the suggestion of a Labour Party within the Liberal Party must have made them smile, —“within” was just the fitting word.

The influence of the new party upon legislation became obvious in its first session. Fortunate in the ballot for Bills, it took an early opportunity to introduce its own draft measure for the reversal of the Taff Vale judgment, and, though it was not strong enough to carry its own Bill, it was able, with the assistance of the Trade-Union group, to force the Liberal Government to grant a partial restitution of Trade-Union rights in the Trades Dispute Act of 1906. Another measure, passed in the same session, the direct outcome of pressure by the Labour Party, was the Education (Provision of Meals) Act under which local education authorities received power to provide meals for necessitous school children. The party, also, began its campaign to familiarise the House (and through the House the country generally) with its programme by moving resolutions on many things, including Old Age Pensions, Votes for Women, Unemployment, and Sweated Trades.

The fight over the Trades Dispute Act necessitated the party giving general support to the very men it had come into existence to oppose. Accordingly it did not escape criticism and had to face the charge that its talk of independence was more assumed than real. Keir Hardie replied effectively to these critics in an article, contributed to the December 1906 issue of *The Nineteenth Century and After*, in the course of which he said :

This objection proceeds on the assumption that it is the business of the members of an independent party to be always running amok at the Treasury Bench. Such critics forget that these would be the tactics of despair, and that we are not in a despairing mood. Thirty men cannot hope to monopolise the time of Parliament and the most that can be expected from them is to see that value is received for the support which is given to the Government of the day. We have supported the Government and opposed the Government just as we deemed the interests of the workers required.

The party in the House were by no means at one in their ultimate views. Among the 30 were men who were advanced

Socialists, whilst others were not Socialists at all but simply Trade-Union leaders. This notwithstanding, the party carried the unity which had marked the campaign in the constituencies into the House, and they worked amicably and harmoniously together. All knew that behind them, whether Socialists or not, was a united Movement numbering upwards of 900,000 affiliated members. At this time the only union of any importance outside the Labour Party was the Miners' Federation, which had 14 of its men in the House.¹

The Federation did not unite with the Labour Party till 1909. When it did the Liberal-Labour group in the House may be said to have disappeared, for the few who remained were quickly submerged in the Liberal ranks and no recruits were forthcoming.

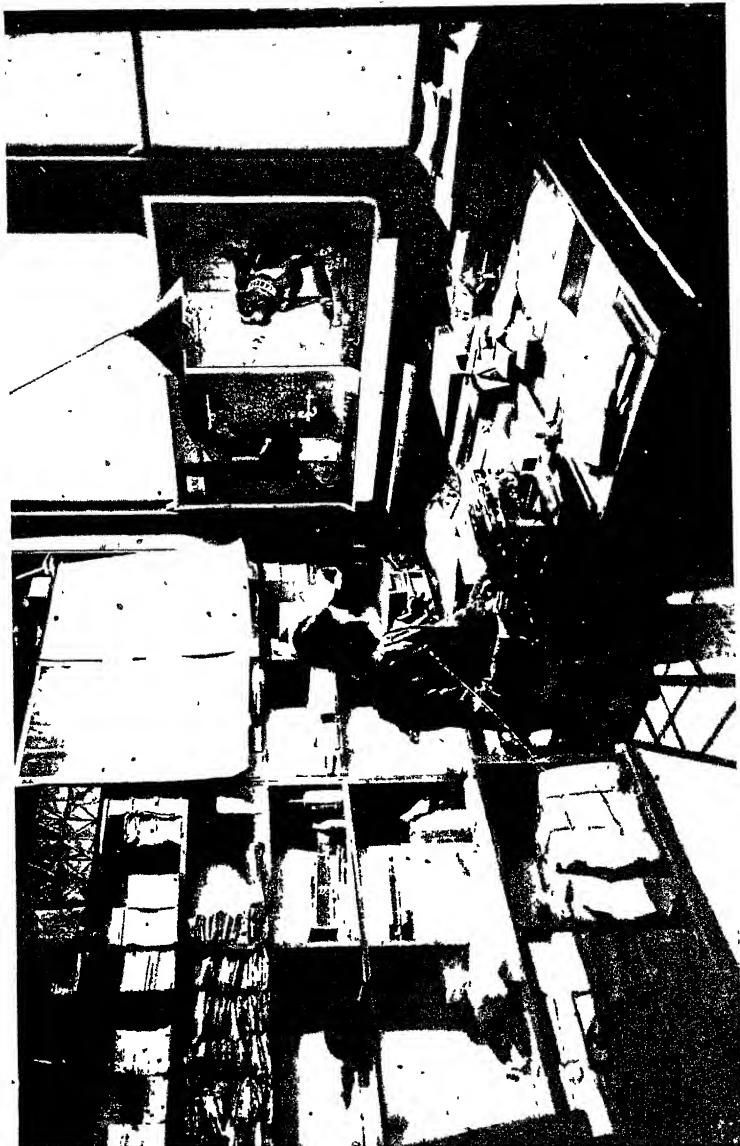
During the years 1906-09 the party increased its strength in the House to 32. It took part in 15 by-elections, many of them mere propaganda fights, and won two of them, Jarrow and Attercliffe, against all other parties. In addition Mid-Derby was won by a Miners' candidate. The year 1907 saw the return of the first Independent Socialist to Parliament in the victory of Victor Grayson in what had been considered a Liberal stronghold. Grayson's candidature was not officially supported by Labour headquarters nor, although in the few years he was in the House he often acted with the Labour Party, was he ever properly of it.

In the same period members attended assiduously to the business of Parliament, using any and every chance to ginger up the Government and point the way to new legislation. The history of these years is the story of constant pressure by Labour on the Liberal Party and frantic efforts by the latter to retain its lead as the party of progress and reform. The year 1908, for instance, saw Labour's agitation on behalf of the aged fructify in the Old Age Pension Act. It also saw the passing of the Coal Mines (Hours) Act, the Trade Boards Act, and the Labour Exchanges Act soon after—all of which measures were intimately affected by Labour.²

The Party in Parliament, in common with its organisation outside, received a set-back in 1908 in the legal decision

¹ Actually 13, for one of them, J. W. Taylor, became a member of the party, though he had fought as a miners' candidate.

² These and other reforms which the Labour Party either proposed or secured during the years 1906-14 are dealt with in detail in Chapter X headed "Converting the Electors."



LABOUR PARTY'S FIRST OFFICE, 28, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W., 1905

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(given by the House of Lords on appeal) against the use of Trade-Union funds for political purposes. This, though temporarily embarrassing financially, made no difference to its numerical strength in the House and did but deflect a portion of the energies of the Movement over the next few years to the struggle of getting the law amended.¹ The work of the party during 1909 was overshadowed by the constitutional deadlock between Lords and Commons, brought to the issue of an election by the action of the Upper Chamber in rejecting the Budget, which included several financial reforms demanded by Labour. The views held by the Parliamentary Party on the question were clear and defined. Three years before it had moved in the House to declare for the abolition of the Lords as "irresponsible" and a "hindrance to national progress." It went, therefore, farther on the subject than the Liberals as a whole, but it was willing to support any less drastic proposals which aimed at curtailing the authority of the Lords. For it saw that the Upper Chamber would have to be dealt with before any party could make progress of a fundamental character. Grave constitutional issues were thus at stake and the party entered the election of January, 1910, with some misgivings. Its position was peculiar. The Liberals, by virtue of their position, held the centre of the stage in what must surely prove a popular battle. In direct issues of this kind third parties, especially if they be small, are apt to suffer eclipse. But, as events proved, the party leaders need have had no great fears: the Movement had taken root. The final list of candidates contained 78 names, 40 of which were returned. The party lost 8 seats but won three a net loss of only 5. Among the new gains was Derby, which returned J. H. Thomas to the House for the first time. The total vote was increased, by 183,000, to an aggregate of over half a million.

In the old Parliament the party had occupied, naturally, seats on the Opposition side of the House. The increase in the number of Conservatives returned as a consequence of the election now crowded it off these benches and, much as it disliked doing so, it eventually, at the special request of the Speaker, crossed the floor to the Government side and occupied the front two rows below the gangway. G. N. Barnes was elected chairman in succession to Arthur Henderson.

¹ The Osborne Judgment, and the Trade Union Act 1913, which reversed it, are recorded in the following chapter.

The session was not a satisfactory one from the Labour standpoint. Members' ill-fortune, in the ballot for Bills, persisted, and it thus got little opportunity to initiate or promote new measures. Further, the strained relationship between the two Chambers dominated the situation, complicated and protracted as it was by the death of King Edward and the accession of his successor. A conference between leaders, from which Labour emphatically disassociated itself, failed to find a way out of the deadlock and the Government was once more flung back upon the country and decided to appeal again for a mandate.

At the December election Labour ran 56 candidates—22 less than it had mustered eleven months previously—and returned 42 strong, gaining 5 and losing 3, a net gain of 2 seats. The gains included Woolwich, re-won by Will Crooks; Bow and Bromley, at last carried by George Lansbury; and West Fife, won by William Adamson, first Labour Secretary of State for Scotland. The reduction in the number of candidates run was mainly due to the Osborne judgment which now began to make itself felt. For the first time since its inception the party's aggregate vote fell. It declined by 134,000 votes; almost solely due, we are told in the Executive's report, to the smaller number of candidates run.

The new Parliament saw J. Ramsay MacDonald, who relinquished his position as secretary of the National Party upon appointment, elected chairman, and J. R. Clynes as vice-chairman. Mr. MacDonald continued to hold the post of chairman down to the outbreak of war, when he resigned, his place being taken by Mr. Henderson.

From 1911 to the outbreak of war the party was interested in 16 by-elections, in four of which it was called upon to defend the seats. It lost two of them—Hanley and North-East Derbyshire. These same years saw the party, though growing in strength up and down the country and able in new areas to poll a substantial vote, still stationary as a small group in the House, caught up in the struggle over the passing into law of the Parliament Act, and unable, through sheer lack of numbers, to do all that it desired or that its supporters expected. Under the pressure of Lloyd George and the Radical group the Liberals continued their policy of advanced proposals which, though not so advanced as they seemed, were sufficiently novel to keep the Liberals in the limelight and to prevent the Labour Party from coming into its own.

These same years, too, were years of great industrial unrest, workers everywhere were restive, especially railway and transport men. Parliamentary Labour stock slumped badly. The high hopes entertained by the masses after the successes of 1906 had not materialised. Supporters, therefore, began to waver in their allegiance and the more impatient of them began to talk of the hopelessness of parliamentary action as a means of redressing grievances. Instead of realising how impotent so small a group must be against a majority, largely returned by the workers themselves, Trade Unionists began to complain of the paucity in achievement on their behalf. Men commenced to turn from the political field (just as their predecessors had in earlier times) to weapons and ideas of another kind. Syndicalism began to make converts. But the story of this Movement, and other left-wing tendencies which started to extend their influence about this time, properly belongs to, and must be reserved for, another chapter.

Meanwhile, it will be well at this point to sum up the position in which the organised working-class movement stood, legally and politically, at the time when it entered upon the new phase of its activities with the establishment of the Labour Representation Committee. Its bid for political power was challenged by the older parties. A shrewd blow was struck at the infant party through the Trade Unions. In the next chapter the circumstances of this attack are described in the light of legal history of the industrial organisations.

CHAPTER IX

LABOUR'S RIGHT TO EXIST

Legal Attacks on Labour—Work of Hume and Place—Trade-Union Rights—Charter of the Trade Unions, 1871—Taff Vale Case—Its Effects on Labour's Political Organisation—Trade Disputes Act—Its Significance—Effects on Unions and Labour Party—Growing Power of Organised Labour—Ferment of New Ideas.

HERE is no more certain indication of the position of Labour in the State than the attitude of the law towards Trade Unions. It has been truly said that we have to trace the advance of the Labour Movement through a series of attacks upon Trade Unionism. Labour's right to exist has only been secured by the continuous and strenuous effort of successive generations of workers. Just as in Rome and Italy as long ago as the year 62 B.C. there was a party in the Senate who attempted to introduce laws to make "workmen's associations" illegal, so throughout the centuries of English history there have been those who have waged incessant war upon "unlawful associations of wage earners" and their "evil combinations to raise wages." We find, in all, over a score of Acts of Parliament restricting the freedom of workmen to combine before we come to the Elizabethan period. During the next two centuries the prohibition of combinations continued; but it should be observed that the prohibition was incidental to the regulation of industry, as the statutes aimed at the fixing of wages, the prevention of embezzlement, the enforcement of the contract of service, and the proper arrangements for apprenticeship. The Statute of Apprentices, passed in 1562 and not finally repealed until 1875, is the best known of such enactments. Throughout this period the Justices continued to fix wages and determine the hours of work, and any combination to resist the order of the Justices on these matters was of the nature of rebellion to be ruthlessly repressed.

Finally, the trend towards individualism, reinforced by the fears inspired by the French Revolution, led to the passing

in 1799 of a general Act for the suppression of all combinations by workmen for the purpose of raising wages. This Act was further amended in 1800. Under these Combination Acts, as they were called, a workman was made liable to imprisonment for three months if he entered into a contract for obtaining an advance of wages or shortening hours of work or for preventing persons employing whomsoever they thought proper, or if he entered into a combination for these objects ; and all such contracts were declared void. While, therefore, the State had withdrawn the last vestige of its protection of the workman, at the same time it was sought to prevent him from combining with his fellows in his own defence. And though the Combination Acts applied in theory to employers as well as workmen, in fact there is no case on record in which an employer was punished for this offence. On the other hand, during the period of repression thousands of journeymen suffered punishment for the crime. This state of affairs caused many organisations to carry on their Trade-Union practices under the guise of Friendly Societies, which were undoubtedly lawful. Even so, it is interesting to find that during these very years numerous fresh societies were instituted.

The undoubted legal persecution of the workers—aided and abetted by such judges as Sir John Sylvester, the Common Sergeant of London and known as " Bloody Black Jack "—was powerless to prevent the growth of the movement towards combination. Indeed, the main use of the law by the employers was to checkmate strikes and to ward off demands for better conditions of labour. " But their repeal was a necessary preliminary to the growth among the most oppressed sections of the workers of any real power of protecting themselves, by Trade-Union effort, against the degradation of their standard of life."¹ This necessary work was taken in hand by two men of outstanding ability and amazing industry—Joseph Hume and Francis Place. Their skilful manipulation of the Committee, which they induced the House of Commons to appoint to inquire into the Combination Laws, led to unanimous resolutions in favour of complete freedom of combination and the introduction of a Bill incorporating their views. The Bill became law within a week. So quietly had the work been accomplished that certain cotton-weavers in Lancashire were sentenced to imprisonment for combination

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 82-83.

some weeks after the Laws had been repealed. In fact, the success of their efforts was too overwhelming, and largely owing to the occurrence of many strikes in the following year (1825) an amendment to the Combination Repeal Act of 1824 became law, which, whilst preserving the lawfulness of combinations, created the specific offences of "threats, intimidation, molestation, and obstruction." Nevertheless, the importance of this first step can scarcely be exaggerated; the right of collective bargaining was for the first time *expressly* established. Apart from the specific offences mentioned in the Act, a trade combination was no longer in itself criminal, although it was still civilly unlawful at common law, and indeed, as will be shown later, criminal so far as the law of conspiracy operated.

Freed from legislative or judicial interference, the growth of Trade Unionism continued. But the fears of Place and Hume were destined to be realised because the specific offence of "molestation" created by the Act of 1825 was so interpreted as to afford an effective weapon against Trade Unionism. Moreover, during these years the conception of "conspiracy" at common law was developed in such a way as to render combinations of workmen criminal. Thus in 1833 Lord Melbourne directed the answer to be returned to certain Yorkshire manufacturers, who presented a memorial on the subject of Trade Unions, that "His Majesty's Ministers entertained a strong opinion of the criminal character" of the Unions, and added that "no doubt could be entertained that combinations for the purposes enumerated are illegal conspiracies and liable to be prosecuted as such at common law." It is undoubtedly true that "for half a century after the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824-5 the question seems, in the minds of judges and legislators, always to have been muddled up with that of physical violence."¹ Further the statute law of Master and Servant was still unrepealed; under these Acts, if an employer broke a contract of service, he was liable to be sued only in damages, but a workman who wilfully broke his contract was liable to be proceeded against for a criminal offence and punished by three months' imprisonment. Over ten thousand such cases came before the courts in a single year. Another legal weapon was the Act of George III penalising the administering of an oath by an unlawful society; it was under this law that the trial and transportation of "the

¹ Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, Appendix I, p. 803.

Dorchester labourers," one of the best-known episodes of early Trade-Union history, proceeded. Picketing was also considered to be an "intimidation" within the meaning of the Act of 1825, even when it was peaceful. Legal opinion was not, however, unanimous, for in 1847 Baron Rolfe confined "intimidation" under the 1825 Act to threats of personal violence and considered that there was no illegality in people agreeing among themselves not to work upon certain terms and peacefully trying to persuade others to adopt the same view. In 1859 was passed the Molestation of Workmen Act, intended to redefine the terms "molestation and obstruction" contained in the 1825 Act, and which included a proviso that nothing contained therein should authorise any workman to break any contract or attempt to induce any other person to do so. For the criminal provisions of the Master and Servant Acts were not repealed until the year 1867, such repeal constituting the first positive Parliamentary success of the Trade-Union leaders who have become known as the "Junta," and who were at that time organising an active political campaign.

Again, it should be observed that, quite apart from the question of criminality, the normal activities of industrial organisations tend to produce the legal position known as Restraint of Trade. The growth of this conception in the law of England can be traced from the Middle Ages, but it must suffice here to state that by the nineteenth century the view was strongly held that any fetters on free competition were undesirable in the public interest. Certainly such organisations as restrained labour would not be held to be for the advantage of the public. And though the better opinion would appear to be that a combination was never criminal at common law, yet there was a general consensus of legal opinion that such an agreement was unenforceable and was tainted with illegality arising from the restraint. The seriousness of their situation was brought home to certain Trade Unions, who found themselves unable to recover in a civil action moneys wrongly taken from them by members. "Thus, apparently, before 1871 a Trade Union illegal at common law by reason of its objects being in restraint of trade was without legal redress and must be considered, if not criminal, to have been at least an outlaw."¹

Such was the state of the law relating to Trade Unions

¹ Slesser, *The Law Relating to Trade Unions*, p. 29.

when a Royal Commission was appointed primarily in order to inquire into certain outrages committed at Sheffield in the year 1867. "Trade Unionism was now at bay, assailed on both sides"¹; the employers were determined to use the Royal Commission and the Sheffield outrages to suppress Trade Unionism by the criminal law. It was well for the Junta that their counsels were reinforced by a group of able lawyers, trusted friends of the Trade-Union movement, such as Frederic Harrison and Henry Crompton, who rendered yeoman service to the cause in its hour of trial. As a result of their efforts, in 1869 a provisional measure giving temporary protection to Trade-Union funds was hurried through Parliament pending the introduction of a complete Bill. In the next session a reluctant Government was compelled to fulfil its promise—the ingenious device by which the Unions obtained full protection for their funds without exposing themselves to be proceeded against in a court of law was preserved in the Bill together with the main provision that no Trade Union was henceforth to be illegal merely because it was in restraint of trade. From the point of view of the criminal law the Bill was not so satisfactory to the Unions, since, in effect, it proposed to re-enact the terms of the old Combination Laws with regard to "molestation," "obstruction," "threats," "intimidation," and so forth. It even went so far as to repeal the Molestation of Workmen Act of 1859, which had expressly legalised peaceful persuasion to join legal combinations. The utmost, however, that the continued protests of the Trade Unionists could effect was to secure that the Bill should be divided into two parts, which ultimately became the Trade Union Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of the year 1871. "Trade Societies became, for the first time, legally recognised and fully protected associations; whilst, on the other hand, the legislative prohibition of Trade-Union action was expressly reaffirmed, and even increased in stringency."²

The Trade-Union Act, 1871, has been termed the "charter of Trade Unionism"; it furnished on the civil side a solid legal basis for Trade-Union activity. Whilst previously no Court of Justice would recognise or enforce Trade-Union rules, by virtue of section 3 of the Act their rules and trusts can no longer be treated as invalid by reason of their being

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 262.

² *Ibid.*, p. 282.

in restraint of trade. Moreover, Trade Unions became fully capable of entering into agreements enforceable at law except that by section 4 of the Act the Court is precluded from entertaining proceedings instituted for the purpose of "directly enforcing or recovering damages for the breach of" certain defined agreements, e.g. agreements between one Trade Union and another are unenforceable, as also are agreements to pay benefits to members of Trade Unions. But perhaps the most noteworthy feature of the Act is the manner in which the voluntary character of Trade Unions is preserved and the limitations involved in the status of incorporation are avoided. This highly ingenious device, which was deliberately adopted by the Junta and their advisers, has given rise to many difficulties, as the registration to which they became entitled, if their rules were not expressly in contravention of the criminal law, effected no fundamental change in the legal position of Trade Unions. But a registered Trade Union became, in the words of Lord Justice Farwell, "a statutory legal entity, anomalous in that, although consisting of a fluctuating body of individuals, and not being incorporated, it can own property and act by agents."

The above brief account of the main provisions of the Act of 1871 indicates its fundamental character and its claim to be regarded as a "complete charter legalising Unions." Its importance and value was obscured by the passing in the same year of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which repealed the Acts of 1825 and 1859 and codified judicial decisions rendering almost every incident of strike management criminal. Imprisonment with hard labour up to three months was to be inflicted on everyone who, with a view to coerce another for trade purposes, should—

- (1) Use personal violence.
- (2) Threaten so as to justify a magistrate in binding the threatener over to keep the peace.
- (3) Molest or obstruct in any of the following ways :
 - (a) By persistently following any person about from place to place;
 - (b) By hiding his tools, clothes, or other property;
 - (c) By watching or besetting his house, or following him along any street or road with two or more other persons in a disorderly manner.

It also further provided that, save as above stated, no one should be liable to any punishment for doing or conspiring to

do any act, on the ground that such act restrains or tends to restrain the free course of trade.

To Trade Unionists it seemed that this statute completely negatived all the concessions of the Trade-Union Act: it seemed futile to grant legal recognition to Trade Unions whilst declaring their characteristic methods of attaining their ends to be criminal. The agitation for its repeal was heightened by a number of convictions during this period for "peaceful picketing," for "molestation and obstruction" under the terms of the new Act, and for "conspiracy" *at common law*. Within four years the agitation was successful, and in 1875 the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act was passed which nullified the above-mentioned decisions and is the main statute to this day affecting Trade Unions in their criminal aspect. Its effects may be said to be that any special association of criminality with Trade-Union activity came to an end; the act of a group of workmen is not punishable unless the same act committed by an individual is a criminal offence.

With the passing of the Acts of 1871 and 1875 the legal position of Trade Unions seemed secure, and so in fact it remained to the end of the nineteenth century. Towards the close of the century, however, though the attempt to suppress Trade Unionism by the criminal law had been abandoned, the officers of Trade Unions found themselves involved in civil actions. In carrying out their official duties, particularly in connection with strikes, they committed "torts," i.e. actionable wrongs for which they were liable to be sued and to have heavy damages awarded against them. The results of such actions were not, however, altogether satisfactory from the standpoint of those initiating them, and it was then thought better to make the Union responsible so as to render their funds liable to be attached. Hitherto the anomalous position occupied by Trade Unions, in accordance with the Trade Union Act of 1871, had been universally recognised, but in 1901 an attempt was made to render them liable in tort, despite the fact that they were unincorporated voluntary associations. The Taff Vale Railway Company sued not the officials of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, but the Trade Union itself in its registered name. The judgment eventually delivered by the House of Lords threw the whole Trade-Union world into consternation, for it decided that a Union could be sued for damages arising out of the action of its officers or servants even during a trade dispute,

i.e. it found itself burdened with the liability of a corporate body. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was mulcted in £23,000 damages and incurred a total expense of £42,000.

The full significance of the judgment was not immediately realised, but gradually the trend of judicial decisions showed clearly how the most innocent acts of a Trade-Union official might be held actionable and how unlimited was the financial responsibility thus laid upon the Union. "Trade Unionism had to a great extent lost its sting"¹; disputes in the labour world fell to half the number annually of the previous decade. The effect of the decision was that Trade Unionists had to fight over again the battle for the right of combination which was believed to have been won in 1871-5.

But the full effects of the Taff Vale judgment must be sought in a wider field than that of Trade Unionism or the Law. "The first result was to make the newly-formed Labour Party . . . into an effective political force."²

The years after 1871 were characterised by the rise of Labour to a junior partnership with the Liberal Party, a position which accorded entirely with the ideas of such organisations as the Labour Electoral Association and the Labour Representation League. These organisations had nothing to do with independent political action; their aim was to provide Parliament with the technical knowledge and experience of the Labour leaders. In the later years of the nineteenth century the activities of the S.D.F., the Fabian Society, and I.L.P. stirred the calm of the Trade-Union world, but the idea of Labour independence, directed alike against Liberals and Conservatives, was regarded by the bulk of Trade Unionists as the acme of revolutionary thought and the most repellent expression of class warfare. At the General Election of 1892 the Labour Electoral Association was responsible directly or indirectly for almost all the Liberal-Labour candidates and entirely dissociated itself from the few independent Labour candidates, e.g. it supported Mr. Illingworth, the Liberal, in his opposition to Mr. Ben Tillett in West Bradford, on the grounds that it would be no party to a course of action which would give a Liberal seat to the Tory Party.

On this state of Trade-Union opinion the Taff Vale judg-

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 608.

² *Ibid.*, p. 604.

ment exercised a decisive influence. "There is no doubt that this desire to break the Trade-Union fund had far more effect in stimulating an interest in the formation of the Labour Party than any general desire for the furtherance of Socialism or dislike of the capitalistic state."¹ Trade Unionists began to see clearly that new legislation would be required to counteract the deadening influence of this judgment upon their industrial activity.

The first claim of the Labour Party was for the statutory reversal of the Taff Vale judgment, which everyone now admitted to be necessary. Early in the year 1906 the Royal Commission on Trade Disputes and Trade Combinations, which had been appointed by the Conservative Government, issued its report. Its proposals, however, were rejected by the Labour Party (the Trade Unions had refused to give evidence before it), who proceeded to bring their own Bill intended to restore the position under the 1871 Act. The political strength of the new movement became manifest when the newly returned Liberal Government abandoned its own Bill, based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and passed into law the Trade Disputes Act of 1906.

How completely this Act negatived the effect of the Taff Vale and kindred judgments may be gathered from the oft-repeated complaint amongst lawyers that Trade Unions have by its provisions been placed "*above the law.*" Its first and foremost object was to relieve Trade Unions from liability for the wrongful acts of their servants done in the course of their employment, such as interfering with the legal rights of others in an industrial dispute. This object the Act attains by the fourth section, a very wide provision which is not confined to acts done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute but extends to all "*torts.*" This section of the Act declares that "an action against a Trade Union, whether of workmen or masters, or against any members or officials thereof on behalf of themselves and all other members of the Trade Union in respect of any tortious act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the Trade Union, *shall not be entertained by any Court.*" Thus is the complete immunity of Trade Unions from legal proceedings sought to be secured, an immunity which it was thought was secured previous to the Taff Vale judgment by the deliberate avoidance of incorporation in the Act of 1871.

¹ Slesser, *Trade Unionism*, p. 45.

Again, the first section of the Act provides that "an act done in pursuance of an agreement or combination by two or more persons shall, *if done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute*, not be actionable unless the act, if done without any such agreement or combination, would be actionable." This clause effectively limits the common-law liability for conspiracy of persons acting together in trade disputes, but leaves it unaffected in every other case—a most valuable protection to Trade-Union officials. And the words "in contemplation or furtherance" have been explained to mean that "either a dispute is imminent and the act is done in expectation and with a view to it, or that the dispute is already existing and the act is done in support of one side to it."

In the Act also a "trade dispute" means any dispute between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, which is connected with the employment or non-employment, or the terms of the employment, or with the conditions of labour, of any person, and "workmen" means all persons employed in trade or industry, whether or not in the employment of the employer with whom a trade dispute arises. Similarly another section renders it lawful "in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute" for "one or more persons . . . to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working." These words re-establish beyond any shadow of doubt the right of "peaceful picketing," an essential element of the right to strike. Nevertheless it must be remembered that "watching and besetting" or "trespass" is still unlawful. Protection is also afforded in cases where the action of a Union through its officials results in the procurement of a breach of contract, as another section provides that under the same conditions an act "is not actionable on the ground only that it induces some other person to break a contract of employment or that it is an interference with the trade, business, or employment of some other person, or with the right of some other person to dispose of his capital or his labour as he wills."

The Trade Disputes Act placed Trade Unions in possession of exceptional statutory privileges and marked the culmination of the political influence of Trade Unionists. It was the

first-fruits of the victory of the Labour Party. Not unnaturally this victory raised the hopes of Trade Unionists, who began to see in the Labour Party the cure for all industrial injustice ; some went so far as to say that the strike was an obsolete and useless weapon. Steps were taken to secure that the Labour forces in the House of Commons should be as united as possible ; the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade-Union Congress urged that the Trade-Union group of members should loyally support the Labour Party. The Labour Party, however, was jealous of its independence and made it quite clear that it would not support candidates of the Trade-Union group on other than Labour platforms. Meanwhile, the official Liberal Party regarded these overtures with some apprehension, as is sufficiently indicated by the proposal to form a Labour Party within the Liberal Party—a source of great strength to both ! Needless to say, this proposal of the Liberal Party was not made to the twenty-nine Labour Members of Parliament elected under the auspices of the Labour Representation Committee (now the Labour Party). The proposed " National Liberal-Labour League " was never formed. Concurrently with these efforts on the part of the Liberals, there was another entirely different effort made to make the Labour Party a purely Trade-Unionist Party, i.e. to insist that all Members of Parliament should belong to a bona-fide Trade Union. This proposal was eventually defeated in Congress by a comparatively narrow margin, and the party was saved from adopting what would be represented as a narrow class basis.

Nevertheless, following upon the unique initial success of the party, the inevitable disillusionment set in and the voice of criticism was raised. Little or nothing was done in the year 1907, while in the succeeding years the Liberal Party ceased to treat the Labour members with that excessive deference which had been the early result of their unlooked-for advent. General political conditions militated against the effectiveness of the party ; reinforced as they were by the erstwhile Liberal-Labour members, their criticism of the Government was somewhat restrained, and they were also compelled to support the measures of social reform introduced by the Liberals. Later the constitutional issue, the conflict between Commons and Lords, occupied the political field to the exclusion of industrial problems.

In these circumstances it is not surprising to find a decided

reaction among Trade Unionists from the view which had been uppermost in the first decade of the twentieth century—that the shortest and the most convenient way of securing Trade-Union objects was by political action. The more ardent spirits, in part fired by Continental example, turned to the task of reorganising the industrial forces ; to this task they were urged by the influx of new ideas and wider aspirations in the Trade-Union world. It must also be kept in mind that there was during these years a continuous and steady growth in membership of the Unions—by 1913 the number of Trade Unionists was approximately four millions—while a large number of new societies was springing into existence. The Trade-Union leaders, disappointed in the results hitherto obtained by Parliamentarianism, began to express the aspiration of their members to take part in the actual *control* of the industries in which they were engaged. “Just as the Trade Unionists in Robert Owen’s day eighty years ago, worsted in their efforts to overthrow capitalism by ‘direct action,’ turned disillusioned to the political weapons of Chartism, so now there appeared a revulsion from the exaggerated hopes placed in parliamentary representation to the old methods of industrial warfare.”¹ Hitherto the typical Trade Unionist had accepted the existing organisation of industry and was solely concerned to improve the conditions of employment of the members of his own organisation. The Trade-Union leaders were immersed in a multitude of detail covering a very wide range of material circumstances and moral considerations. This preoccupation with detail checked the wider hopes and aspirations of which even in that period we catch an occasional glimpse. “Trade Societies,” state the Rules of the Associated Shipwrights, “must be maintained as the guard of workmen against capitalists until some higher effort of productive co-operation has been inaugurated which shall secure to workers a more equitable share of the product of labour.” The “Socialist” Trade-Union leaders belonged to the Collectivist school and looked to the Central Government for the eventual nationalisation of industry ; other leaders pinned their faith to the development of Co-operative production. Outside the ranks of Trade Unionists, among the more advanced political movements such as the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation, the same ideas prevailed ; in fact the latter body tended to regard the whole

¹ C. M. Lloyd, *Trade Unionism*, p. 45.

Trade-Union movement as a mere *palliative* of the capitalist system.

“ With the opening years of the twentieth century we become aware of a new intellectual ferment, not confined to any one country, nor even to the manual working class. We watch, emerging in various forms, new variants of the old idea of the organisation of industries and services by those who are actually carrying them on.”¹ In France and the United States the Trade-Union movement was of recent growth and its condition was in many ways analogous to that of British Trade Unionism in the days of Robert Owen. These movements lent themselves readily to the new doctrines ; “ Syndicalism ” became the accepted creed. The political State was denounced and the conception of a republic of industry installed in its place ; the federation of branches, local unions, and shop clubs formed the Local Authority, whilst a standing conference of the national delegates of all the Trade Unions constituted the National Authority. The cherished method of attaining these ends was that of “ the general strike.” Nor is it surprising, when we consider the political impasse and the checks to Trade-Union development in England, that these newer conceptions found some response among the groups who were in revolt against the limited aims of contemporary Trade Unionism. The new ideas gained most ground among the miners and the engineers. The advocates of the new gospel appealed to the experience of the ages and the teaching of history that political power depends ultimately on economic power. “ In short,” they said, “ Social Democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of Democracy.”² The publication of the famous pamphlet *The Miners’ Next Step* in 1912 marked the culminating point of the propaganda in Britain ; and, despite the constant advocacy of revolutionary Trade Unionism by Tom Mann, the Syndicalist movement had begun to die down in 1914. That is not to say, however, that permanent results of the propaganda may not be traced in Trade-Unionist thought ; rejecting such revolutionary proposals, the English workman has retained the ideal of a self-governing industry. The bridge between the old conception of Trade Unionism and the new was built by a fresh group of Socialists, who called themselves National

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 654.

² James Connolly, *Socialism made Easy*.



LABOUR PARTY'S STAFF IN 1905.
J. Ramsay MacDonald (first Secretary of the Party) and J. S. Middleton

Guildsmen. But these new ideas did not, as we shall see in the next chapter, divert the political leaders of the working-class movement from the task assigned to them. Their business was to educate the electors of the country and to win them from their allegiance to the older parties. They had to face formidable difficulties. What measure of success they obtained in influencing political opinion and shaping legislation in the years immediately preceding the war has now to be described.

CHAPTER X

CONVERTING THE ELECTORS

Labour's Reforming Zeal—Parliamentary Activities—Constituency Organisation—Party Campaigns—Programme Broadens—The Ultimate Object—Provision of Meals for School Children—Unemployment and the Right to Work—Old Age Pensions—Coal Mines (Eight Hour) Act—Adult Suffrage—Licensing Reform—Sweated Trades—National Minimum Wage—Taxation Policy.

THE return of the twenty-nine Labour Party men in the election of 1906 had an immediate influence on party prospects. In Parliament there was a noticeable change not only in the kinds of issues that came up, but in the manner in which they were dealt with, largely due to the intense enthusiasm for reform which characterised the new party. Labour carried into the Commons the zeal that had marked its campaigns in the constituencies, and reforms, popularised in the propaganda of the previous years, were now forced upon an unwilling House as ripe for attention. It may be wondered how this was possible with so small a group. The answer is that the party exercised an ascendancy in the House out of all proportion to its numbers. Its very presence was a challenge, especially to the Liberals, who found they had either to fight Labour openly and expose themselves to the charge that they had no sympathy with the aspirations of the organised workers, or compete with it on an advanced programme of their own. Urged to action by its own Radical group, Liberalism wisely chose the latter alternative and boldly embarked on a forward policy, hoping not only to retain the lead in the eyes of the public, but, incidentally, to spike Labour's guns. A great outburst of social legislation, therefore, followed the election of the 1906 Parliament. And, though the Liberals claim credit for the Old Age Pension Act and other measures associated with these years, the credit is due to the advent of the Labour Party and the pressure of its presence in the House.

The definite establishment of the party in Parliament

had an influence in the country just as real though less spectacular. Its standing with the public was considerably enhanced, its importance increased. No longer could its views be ignored or dismissed with contempt as the sentimental idealism of a negligible minority without a future. Politicians and the Press might continue to consider its aims absurd, its remedies unworkable, but they had to recognise that here was a force to be reckoned with. The party had thus completed the first of the three stages every political party must pass through: it had definitely established itself. We now have to record its efforts towards completing the second, that of converting the electorate in sufficient numbers to enable it to reach the third, and last, stage—a majority and power.

To convert a nation is a difficult and expensive process, requiring courage, ability, unlimited publicity, and vast financial resources. Beyond courage, some ability, and a fine, though vague, faith in its message, Labour lacked all the essentials for success. It suffered under every conceivable disadvantage. Yet, in spite of everything, it gained ground with startling rapidity and to-day counts its adherents not in hundreds but in millions.

What, then, is the secret of its phenomenal rise? What were the assets, meagre though they may have been, with which it began? What avenues of approach to the electorate were open? What were its financial resources? What organisation had it in existence to build on? Above all, upon what programme did it appeal so confidently for support?

To answer these questions it is necessary to understand both the mentality that animated the movement in 1906 and the limits within which it was forced to work even at that period of its career. For the party still suffered from the compromise that had given it birth. In spite of a measure of success at the polls, it had not yet achieved that unity of policy which afterwards marked it off so definitely from the rest, nor outgrown the limits inherent in its original constitution.

Its first concern, when formed in 1900, had been to consolidate its support. Necessarily it looked to those unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress—the body that had brought it into being. In this it had been successful and by 1906 its total affiliated membership had reached a million. It might therefore be assumed that, with a million organised

workers behind it, its task of reaching the electorate would be easy. It was, however, by no means so easy as would appear. To gain the technical adherence of a great body of electors was one thing—their actual support at the polls quite another. The problem, upon which everything ultimately depended, was how to make the affiliated membership a live one by the conversion of the rank and file in numbers large and enthusiastic enough to create the necessary electoral machinery and keep propaganda going on a voluntary basis in the constituencies. An added difficulty was that the settlement of this problem was contingent on the settlement of another: before the rank and file could be converted there must be a Cause to which to convert them. A policy and a programme were required. What were these to be?

The party was a coalition of Trade Unionists and Socialists brought together to further the movement towards working-class political independence. But independence was, in itself, no cause, nor could it ever enthuse multitudes. To be truly independent the party must take its stand on a programme different from any other. In the Socialist programme alone could this be found: short of it the party would sooner or later find its programme indistinguishable from that of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party. And here the difficulty occurred. The Labour Party was not, at this period, socialistic. True it was a coalition of Socialists and others: but of its total membership the Socialists numbered only about 20,000. The party drew its strength and the bulk of its finance overwhelmingly from the Trade Unions, who were nothing more than extreme Radical in tendency. The party, therefore, could not move faster than the Unions were prepared to go, and it was they who set the pace and elaborated policy at annual conferences. When the party was formed, the most that older Trade-Union leaders expected, or desired, from independence was an increase, commensurate with strength, in working-class representation in the House. This achieved, they felt that justice could be won for the workers by reforms within the capitalist system. The Socialists, on the other hand, went further and believed there could be no ultimate hope for the workers until the system itself was altered. Eventually, as we shall see as this chapter proceeds, the movement gravitated more and more to the collectivist standpoint, and by 1906 this process was well advanced though by no means complete. This explains why, in its early stages,

the Labour Party failed to lay down any definite programme and why, even down to the present day, that programme contains proposals which any party might adopt without harm to the capitalist system. Its original propaganda was, therefore, like its constitution, a compromise. It attempted to rouse the people to a knowledge of their condition and to imbue them with a longing for something better. Both Socialist and non-Socialist could do this with full hearts and each could paint his own remedy for the ills he visualised so clearly. In this way the initial difficulty of an independent programme settled itself: the two wings of the movement were kept together and policy has emerged and grown naturally with the membership from year to year.

As with policy so with financial resource and organisation. The movement began its career assured of little monetary support and with but the rudiments of constituency machinery. Even when the bulk of the Unions had affiliated, many of them were unprepared to open their purse-strings widely. They were willing to share in the movement so long as it did not make too heavy a call upon their funds: and the limit with most was reached with the payment of a nominal affiliation fee. Trade-Union executives could not be blamed for this attitude. They could not move beyond the mandate of their members; and their members, as we have already seen, were still attached to the other political parties and could not be expected to support the new party with enthusiastic generosity.

As to organisation, the movement commenced with the assurance of local Trade-Union assistance, but this again was largely nominal. Still, like the income from affiliated societies, it was something not to be despised and proved invaluable as a basis for constituency machinery. The General Election of 1900, though it had come before the party was prepared adequately to face it, had one excellent result: it indicated straightaway the method by which the problem should be tackled and local organisation secured. The handful of candidates who fought that election were considerably helped by local trades councils—organisations consisting of loose federations of Trade-Union and Socialist society branches already well established in many industrial centres. The party, therefore, definitely set to work to organise locally on the same basis as it was organised nationally. Its efforts were successful. Trades councils began to take an increasingly active share in

the national campaign, and all over the country their work took on a new significance ; old councils were quickened to fresh endeavour, new ones were formed, and, where this was not possible, local labour parties were created. In February 1901 seven trades councils are recorded as affiliated. By 1910 the number had increased, including local labour parties, to 155.

The men and women who formed the personnel of these trades councils and local labour parties soon made their presence felt at annual conferences when questions of policy were under discussion. They were the stalwarts with whom the education of the public really rested ; they were the men who, from constant contact with them, could voice the needs and aspirations of the people. Whilst, naturally enough, the progress of the movement is associated with the names of members of Parliament and other leaders, the work of these devoted bands of men and women must not be overlooked. For they were the backbone of the movement who have made all things possible. With little help from headquarters in the way of national speakers ; no money beyond what they could raise themselves ; no publicity but what they could get at the street corner : in the face of a powerful and hostile Press, they strove unceasingly with courage and sacrifice beyond all praise.

The enormous disadvantages under which the new party suffered are now clear. It had no Press, little organisation, less money, a vague programme, and it had to commence work through a medium none too friendly. Strangely enough, these very disadvantages proved to be its greatest assets and are the secret of its phenomenal success. Thrown back upon itself at every turn, forced to rely on the voluntary and enthusiastic help of its adherents, making little appeal to the self-seeker, it has built up a political organisation second to none and entirely democratic. Members take a living interest in its success because they themselves have made it, provide its funds, and have, all through, settled its policy. It can thus claim, in a way no other party can, to voice the political aspirations of a substantial section of the electorate.

But up to the close of 1905 the disadvantages inherent in its constitution were still felt acutely. Although many of the initial difficulties had been surmounted, the movement was not yet sure of itself. But the victories of 1906 changed the situation, set the seal of approval, as it were, upon what had

been done and enabled the leaders to move forward with firmer step. The Unions, now thoroughly awakened to the potentialities of the movement, became more responsive to appeals for financial aid and stronger in their support of the party. Everywhere adherents were heartened to fresh endeavour and local parties realised that their propaganda was bearing fruit.

One big result of these victories was a widening out of policy. From this time onwards we find annual conference agendas crowded with resolutions dealing with every phase of the national life. The aims of Labour broadened; its ultimate object was defined; soon it was able to challenge the older parties on a sweeping programme of its own. How that programme was elaborated, its main features, the steps taken to popularise it, and the measure of its success in the constituencies, we shall now see. It will be well, both in point of view of importance and fundamental effect on general policy, to deal first of all with the principles which the Labour Party has made peculiarly its own, which mark it off so completely from other parties.

The Labour Party is now, whatever it may have been when it began, definitely a Socialist body working steadily towards the emancipation of the people by the establishment of a co-operative commonwealth. Of this it makes no secret and has, in fact, since 1918, when the whole basis was overhauled at a special conference, embodied a declaration to this effect in its Constitution. Its adherence to the Socialist creed, however, goes a good deal farther back than the year 1918. Indeed, at its first annual conference a resolution was moved declaring the party's ultimate object to be the establishment of "an Industrial Commonwealth founded upon the common ownership and control of land and capital." The question was then disposed of without being put to a direct vote, but similar resolutions were tabled in 1903 and 1904 and, going to the vote, were defeated. Curiously enough, when the motion came up at conference the following year it was passed unanimously and without discussion. It must not, however, be assumed that the whole of the party had thus suddenly become converts to the faith. For resolutions reaffirming the 1905 decision appeared on the agenda in 1908 and also in 1909 and, though agreed to, showed very substantial minorities in opposition. Socialism, therefore, remained for the next ten years largely a pious expression of opinion, and though,

of course, as the movement grew, increasing numbers preached it openly, it was not till the last year of the War that it was placed in the forefront as the ultimate goal.

But although Socialism, as a term used in connection with a definite doctrine, remained in the background, the whole tendency of legislation from 1906 has been socialistic. Statesmen might, and did, deny in theory principles they were forced in practice to adopt. Liberals might deprecate State interference as an infringement of the liberties of the subject, but we find them, under the pressure of events, committed deeper and deeper to measures which place on the State burdens and obligations which, in their view, should be borne by the individual. One of the first measures of this description, introduced by the Labour Party in 1906, was the Provision of Meals for School Children Bill. The agitation in favour of such provision had been growing for some time. The evidence submitted to a Commission set up in 1904 to inquire into the causes of national physical deterioration showed that under-feeding was prevalent both in rural and urban districts throughout the country. Labour used the Report issued by the Commission to press for legislation and called a conference in January, 1905, to ventilate the subject and organise opinion thereon. "The first duty of the State," Labour contended, "should be to protect its child-life, which was one of its most valuable assets," and pointed out that the nation had already acknowledged the necessity of educating the children at the public expense. Was that education, it asked, to be wasted because the children were physically incapable of benefiting by it? The nation "should become human gardeners, and rear a race of bonny and strong children" physically fit as well as mentally. The propaganda carried on resulted in the passage of an Act in 1906. Unfortunately, the Labour Party Bill was drastically amended by the House, made permissive, instead of obligatory, on local Education Authorities, and, on the last day of the session, limited to England and Wales by the Lords: a limitation Labour was forced to accept if it wished the Bill passed. As was feared, the permissive powers of the Act rendered it in many places non-effective. In 1908 the party attempted to rectify matters by introducing an amending Bill to provide for medical inspection of school children, made the power to provide meals compulsory, abolish the limit of a $\frac{1}{4}d.$ rate imposed in the earlier Act, and provide that medical inspectors should present annual reports

on the physical condition of school children in their area. But the Bill made no progress and the work of education on the question continued.

On the day before the special conference on the Provision of Meals for School Children, the Labour Party held another, under the chairmanship of Keir Hardie, on the question of Unemployment. The problem was pressing and the need urgent. Unemployment had increased in the years immediately following the South African War (reaching 6 per cent. in 1904) and even the Conservative Government saw the need for action. The problem was, of course, not new and the percentage of unemployment had been higher than it was then. What was new was the fact that the unemployed were at last politically influential through the medium of the Labour Movement. At this conference the party clarified the workers' point of view and laid down the broad lines which have ever since guided its policy on the question. Briefly, Labour declared that the problem was national, not local, and must be treated on a national basis. It advocated, therefore, the setting up of a new Ministry, to be called the Ministry of Labour, through which schemes of national utility, like afforestation, reclamation of foreshores and waste lands, new roads and the erecting of public buildings, should be carried out in times of trade depression. It declared that everyone had a right to work at standard Trade-Union rates of pay and that it was the duty of the State to provide such work when ordinary channels failed.

The first-fruits of the agitation was the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905, which stands out as the first attempt made by a modern Parliament to cope with the problem. The original Bill, as introduced by Mr. Gerald Balfour, provided (1) a certain amount of machinery for dealing with the unemployed, and (2) the payment of wages, under conditions, to the unemployed out of the rates. When the Bill emerged as an Act of Parliament the second provision had disappeared and, whilst machinery was sanctioned, nothing was said as to payment of wages by local authorities. Further, the Act was limited in time to three years.

Although, naturally, pleased that a Government had at last acknowledged not only that the problem existed, but that Parliamentary action was essential to solve it, Labour was disappointed. The Act did practically nothing to relieve the situation, much less indicate a permanent solution. Outside

Parliament Labour could do little beyond continuing the task of arousing interest in the question. But inside, especially with the access of strength received in 1906, it could ventilate the subject and press the remedies. This it did ; year after year it raised the matter on the Address, and session after session, as far as its fortune in the ballot would allow, it introduced its Bill. The Unemployed Workmen Bill of 1907 provided for the constitution of Local and Central Unemployment Authorities with powers and duties (1) to form schemes of reasonable work and in default public maintenance for genuine and willing workers when in need through unemployment ; (2) secure complete registration of all unemployed persons in their areas. Applicants to be classified and put to work that was suitable, and, if physically or industrially unfit, treated with a view to their ultimate improvement. Refusal to accept reasonable work was to release the local authority from its duties under the Bill, though such local authority had permission to enforce the performance of reasonable work by a wastrel. Relief was to be no disqualification from voting. Further, the Bill directed the Local Government Board to draw up schemes for employment on works of national utility and to carry them out in times of exceptional distress. It also conferred on all authorities large powers for the compulsory acquisition of land and for equipment of all kinds. The Bill never reached a second reading in spite of the huge Liberal majority in the House. The Bill under the title of the Right to Work Bill was introduced again in 1908 and became a hardy annual. But it made no progress. To-day we have all parties in agreement on many of Labour's contentions, and its solution has become popular. The problem is now universally acknowledged as a national one and Parliament recognises its duty to help provide employment by State schemes. This is a great change—how great a change can hardly be realised by the present generation which remembers nothing of the fight Labour has put up on the subject and never heard the derisive shouts with which Conservative and Liberal members met Labour's first efforts at redress.

Universal Old Age Pensions, for all with incomes below a certain figure, at the age of 70 became law in 1908. This enactment was the sequel to ten strenuous years' agitation on the part of the Labour Movement. The agitation grew out of conferences between Trade-Union representatives and Mr. Charles Booth (author of the monumental work on the life

and labour of the people of London) in various centres throughout the country ; the first of which met at Browning Hall, Walworth, in December, 1898, under the chairmanship and guidance of Mr. F. Herbert Stead, its Warden. Amongst those present at this initial meeting were Margaret Bondfield, Will Crooks, G. N. Barnes, and others now well known or remembered as prominent members of the Labour Party. All the conferences were of a semi-private character held chiefly to test the extent of the national feeling on the question. And it was quite early apparent that there was a deep and widespread desire on the part of organised Labour that something should be done to brighten the lot of the aged and to remove their closing years from all taint of the Poor Law and the Infirmary which was only waiting for a lead to develop into a campaign national in its scope.

The outcome was the creation of the National Committee of Organised Labour for the Promoting of Old Age Pensions under the secretaryship of Frederick Rogers, Vellum Binders Union and first chairman of the Labour Party, whose career has been described in an earlier chapter. Rogers was an extraordinary man, genial, eloquent, persuasive, and with a breadth of sympathy and outlook that marked him off in any company. Whilst working at his trade he had become a specialist in Elizabethan literature and was looked up to as an authority on the subject. He was a pioneer of the University Extension Movement and took a keen interest in furthering the cause of working-class education. Under his guidance as secretary and with the willing assistance of a band of devoted men and women, the Old Age Pensions Movement went forward with rapid strides. The Trades Union Congress, the Co-operative Societies Congress, and later the Friendly Societies National Conference, gave it whole-hearted support, and, needless to say, the Labour Party were not wanting in a declaration of allegiance to the movement.

The Committee demanded pensions on the following basis : (1) The scheme was to be non-contributory, (2) Universal, (3) at the age of 60, (4) not less than 5s. a week, and (5) provided for by Imperial taxation.

The advent to power of the Liberals in 1906, with a clear majority of 130 over other parties, roused the hopes of supporters of Old Age Pensions : especially as Liberal leaders had expressed themselves as favourable. However, nothing was done during 1906, although the Government announced itself

sympathetic to a resolution moved by the Labour Party on the subject. The principal difficulty, alleged by the Government, was cost. At the beginning of the following year hopes again ran high, for it was known that a Budget surplus was expected. The first disappointment came with the King's Speech, which contained no reference to the question. The Labour Party immediately moved an amendment intending to force the matter to a division, but Mr. Asquith (then Chancellor of the Exchequer), intervening, led the House to understand that provision would be made in the forthcoming Budget and Labour did not press the issue. The Budget, when it came, showed an estimated surplus of three and a quarter millions. To the surprise of everyone this was utilised for the reduction of the rate of income-tax and other purposes: only a small sum was earmarked as a nucleus for an Old Age Pension fund. The dissatisfaction of the workers with the delay of the Government found vigorous expression in two by-elections which occurred during the year. In the first (Jarrow) the Labour man, making Old Age Pensions the main plank in his platform, turned a Liberal majority of 3,000 into a defeat—the Government nominee coming third on the poll. In the second, Victor Grayson, fighting as a Socialist on the same issue, was returned for the Colne Valley division over the heads of both the older parties. The Government were now thoroughly alive to the threat these victories contained, and, as has already been mentioned, 1908 saw an Old Age Pensions Act reach the Statute Book. Except in principle, the Act did not follow the demands put forward. The original suggestion of the Committee had placed the age at 60: and the Labour Party, at a special conference called in January, 1908, had put the maximum age at which pensions should be granted at 65. The Act, however, placed the age limit at 70 and made its application by no means universal. During the passage of the measure through the House, Labour was instrumental in preventing the Government from carrying out its intention to reduce the pension of couples living together to 3s. 9d. each. So strong was the opposition to this suggestion, even among back-bench Liberals, that the Government gave way.

The same year saw the passage of the Coal Mines (Eight Hour) Act. A Bill to give effect to this reform had been frequently introduced on behalf of the miners over a course of twenty years. It at last found a place as a Government

measure, and, though much mutilated in its passage through Committee by numerous concessions to the coalowners, was eventually accepted by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and passed into law. This tardy, and even then only partial, return by the Liberals for the long and ungrudging support of the miners' members, however, came too late. Before the next election took place the miners went over in a body to the Labour Party.

The intensive campaign in favour of extending the franchise to women found ready supporters in the ranks of Labour. The party was committed to the principle of equal political rights for men and women from the first—a resolution to that effect being passed at its conference in 1901. There was, however, a sharp division of opinion as to whether the vote should be given immediately to women or whether it should form part of the larger reform of full adult suffrage. One section held the view that to get the principle established would be a great step forward. Another held that any reform granting women the vote on the existing basis would only increase the power of the propertied classes. The latter view carried the conference in 1906 by a narrow majority and full adult suffrage became the policy of the party. This did not prevent large numbers from assisting the militants in their struggle for an immediate and partial measure, and one Labour member (George Lansbury) actually resigned his seat in order to fight on the issue.

The decision of the Government to introduce, in 1908, its long-heralded Licensing Bill gave the Labour Party an opportunity to place before the public its considered view on the problem of the drink traffic. At its conference held at Belfast in 1907 it laid it down that any measure of temperance reform should confer upon localities full and unfettered power for dealing with the trade in accordance with local opinion. Localities should be free (1) to prohibit the sale of liquor within their boundaries, (2) reduce the number of licences and regulate conditions under which they might be held, and (3) determine whether such licences should be under public or private control. This decision was somewhat different from the decision come to at Liverpool two years earlier. At that conference the delegates adopted a resolution in favour of the public control and ownership of the drink traffic by municipalisation unanimously and without discussion. The Labour Party is not, as a matter of fact, of one mind on this question;

and whilst Local Option still holds the field as the official policy, large numbers in the movement favour State purchase.

During the decade now under review public indignation was stirred at the disclosures made of the shocking conditions under which workers in some trades laboured and the poor rates of pay obtained by them. The trades which came in for the heaviest censure were those in which women and girls were mostly employed, like dress-making, tailoring, cardboard box and chain-making. In October 1906 an Anti-Sweating Conference was held at the Guildhall at which the Labour Party Executive was represented. A Bill was drafted and introduced by Mr. Arthur Henderson, but it was not till 1909 that its main proposals were carried in the Trade Boards Act associated with that year.

As might be expected, the wages question has always been one in which the party has taken a keen interest. Parliamentary records and public speeches made under the auspices of the Movement are full of references to the subject. Throughout Labour has striven to get the House to lay down a National Minimum. In 1911 its motion for a General Minimum Wage of 30s. for every adult worker, especially in Government workshops, was talked out, although it had been successful some years earlier in getting the Government to agree to the insertion of a Fair Wages Clause in all national contracts.

Interest has always centred round Labour's taxation proposals. And whilst every Budget must, naturally, depend on the exigencies of the year, the party has laid down certain axioms for the guidance of its Parliamentary members. It holds that (1) taxation should be in proportion to ability to pay and to the protection and benefit conferred on the individual by the State; (2) no taxation should be imposed which encroaches on the individual's means to satisfy his physical and primary needs; (3) taxation should aim as securing for the communal benefit all unearned increment of wealth and be levied in such a way as to prevent the retention of great fortunes in private hands. The Conference at which these principles were agreed to advocated their immediate application in the following terms: (1) the repeal of existing indirect taxes; (2) the imposition of a super-tax on large incomes; increased estate and legacy duty; and (3) special taxation on State-conferred monopolies and a really substantial beginning with the taxation of land values. Some of these

proposals were adopted and later found a place in Liberal Budgets.

The foregoing is but a part of the story of Labour's influence on the political thinking and legislation of the years down to the outbreak of the Great War. It introduced Bills or moved motions on many subjects, such as Education, Nationalisation of the Coal Mines and Minerals, Agricultural Wages and Hours, Conditions in Shops and Factories, and many others too numerous to mention. Looking back on the years before their advent, it is safe to say that Labour members have revolutionised the whole outlook of Parliament and changed its current irrevocably. And in saying this it should also be added that the ideas and efforts of the Labour Party in Parliament were but the reflex of the feeling in the country. When the party in the House spoke it voiced not only its own view, but the considered judgment of those who sent it there.

But it was still the object of attack, and perhaps its greatest triumph at this stage of its career lay not so much in its winning of popular support or in promoting social legislation as in its successful assertion of its right to exist. Like the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, the Trade Union Act of 1913, dealt with in the next chapter, is a milestone on the road which organised Labour has trodden to reach its goal.

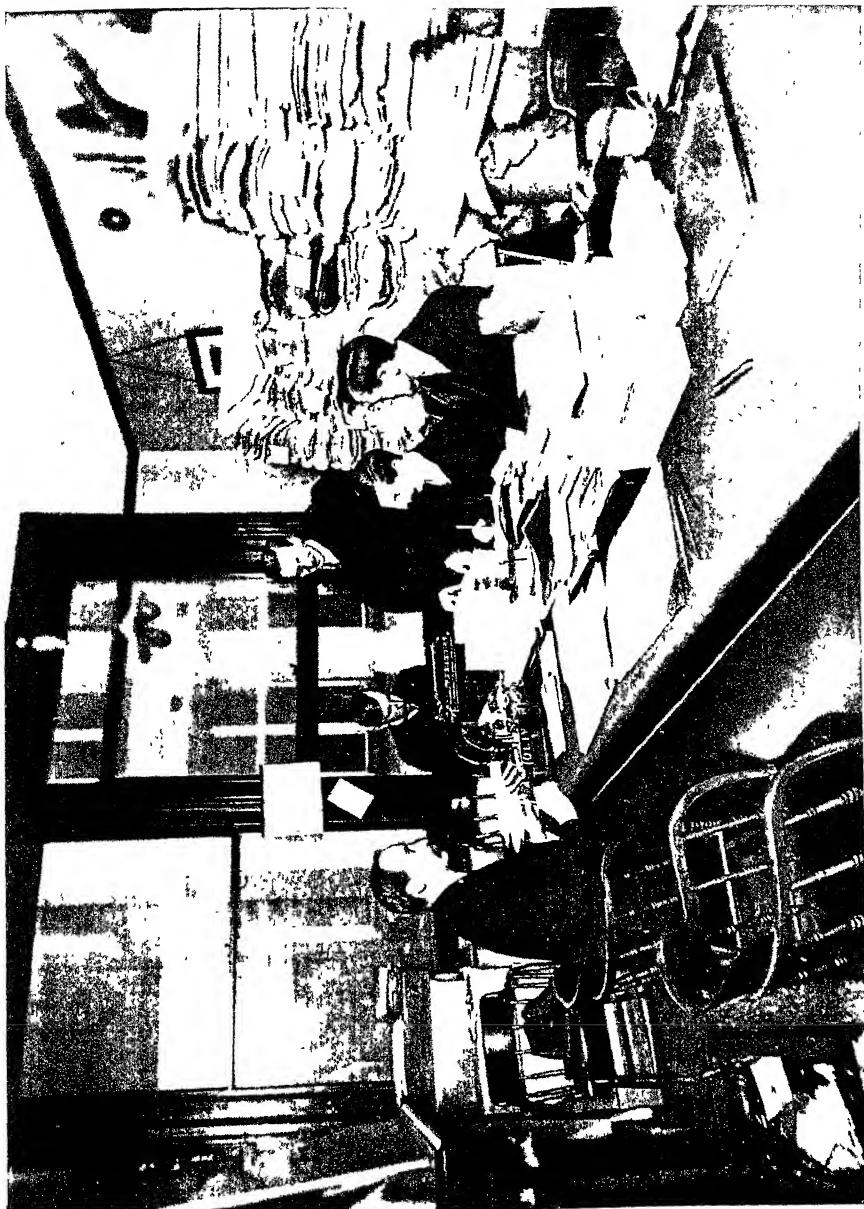
CHAPTER XI

ANOTHER FIGHT FOR LIFE

Political Success rouses Opposition—New Legal Attacks—Osborne Judgment—Its Meanings and Effects—Judge-made Law—Objections to Political Pledge—Restricting Union Action—Labour Agitation—Demand for Amendment of Trade-Union Law—Trade Unions Act, 1913—Its Provisions—The Political Levy—Right of Political Action.

THE passing of the Trades Disputes Act in 1906 was recognised on all hands as a political triumph for the Labour Party, and its prestige and consequently its influence increased more and more throughout the country. The value of independent political action became apparent to the majority of Trade Unionists. Indeed, as we have seen, there prevailed a tendency to foster such extravagant hopes as must lead to inevitable disillusionment. There arose, however, at this time a further difficulty which affected the majority of the Trade Unions, due to the fact that in most Unions there existed a dissentient minority who resented the adherence of their societies to the Labour Party. And as before in Trade-Union history, the attack assumed the form of an appeal to the Courts to decide the limitations of the objects and methods of Trade Unions.

In 1907 an action was brought against his Union by a member of the South Wales Miners' Federation, who objected to paying his contribution towards the expense of returning and maintaining representatives to Parliament. The Federation had adopted a resolution confirming the insertion of this provision among its declared objects. The attack failed, and in view of matters which will have to be fully considered later, it is interesting to note that Mr. Justice Darling declared that the definition of a Trade Union contained in the Trade Union Acts, 1871 and 1876, was not intended to be exhaustive or to prevent the association from lawfully doing other acts beyond those mentioned. In this view Mr. Justice Phillimore agreed, and the enemies of independent political action by Trade Unions were temporarily repulsed.



LABOUR PARTY BEGINNINGS.
The Headquarters Staff in 1906

In July, 1908, the proceedings were started which resulted in the Osborne Judgment. Mr. W. V. Osborne was the secretary of the Walthamstow branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and a foreman porter at Clapham Junction. The society had been established and registered as a Trade Union since the year 1872, but in 1903 words were added to the objects "to secure parliamentary representation." In 1905 and 1906 the rules of the Society were further altered so as to include, with regard to parliamentary representation, a clause to the effect that all candidates should sign and accept the constitution of the Labour Party and be subject to their whip and that suitable provision should be made for the work of registration in a constituency represented by a member of the society. These rules were duly registered under the Trade Union Acts, 1871 and 1876, and a certificate of such registration had been given by the registrar. W. V. Osborne, who objected to these alterations, commenced his action against the society and its trustees to restrain them from distributing moneys for any objects other than those mentioned in section 16 of the Trade Union Act, 1876, which provides as follows: "The term 'trade union' means any combination, whether temporary or permanent, for regulating the relations between workmen and masters, or between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business, whether such combination would or would not, if the principal Act had not been passed, have been deemed to have been an unlawful combination by reason of some one or more of its purposes being in restraint of trade." The principal Act referred to is, of course, the Trade Union Act of 1871.

In the first instance the case was heard by Mr. Justice Neville, who considered himself bound by the decision given in Steele's case, i.e. the decision of Mr. Justice Darling and Mr. Justice Phillimore in the previous year. He, however, expressed the view that, given the right to spend their money to promote their interests in the House of Commons, the question of how they could do so was purely a question of policy with which the Courts would not concern themselves. Osborne was not discouraged by his non-success, but determined to carry his case to a higher tribunal. In this Court, i.e. the Court of Appeal, he was successful, as later in the House of Lords; in fact all the learned Judges, including the

Law Lords, found in his favour, though, as we shall see, there was considerable divergence of opinion as to the true grounds for their decision.

Lord Justice Cozens-Hardy, Master of the Rolls, pointed out that in 1871 the idea of securing parliamentary representation was not one of the objects attempted to be secured by Trade Unions, whilst the provision of benefits to members was within their scope. He further said: "The definition contained in the Act of 1871, or the amended definition in section 16 of the Act of 1876, is a limiting and restrictive definition." He declared that it was not competent to a Trade Union to add to its objects "something so wholly distinct from the objects contemplated by the Trade-Union Acts as a provision to secure parliamentary representation." He found confirmation for his view in the immunities and exemptions conferred upon a Trade Union by the Trades Disputes Act, 1906, as these must have been intended for a "body with limited objects." With regard to the omission of any reference in section 16 to benefits—an omission which had greatly influenced Mr. Justice Darling and Mr. Justice Phillimore in deciding that there was nothing to prevent Trade Unions from having a great number of additional objects besides those mentioned in the section—the Master of the Rolls found that these were provided for elsewhere in the Act itself.

Lord Justice Fletcher Moulton, in dealing with this question, remarked that the name "trade union" had not been created by the Legislature for the purposes of the Acts of 1871 and 1876. "It was at the time a well-known term, connoting combinations of a known type formed for objects and purposes which were well recognised." There was therefore no difficulty in including such collateral or ancillary purposes as the provision of "benefits" or "insurance" within the terms of the definition contained in section 16. "But I cannot think that the Legislature intended that objects not at the time recognised as Trade-Union objects, and not coming within the objects specified in the definition, might form part of the legitimate objects of a Trade Union within the purview of the Acts." He also found an additional reason for entertaining this view in "the wholly exceptional position in the eye of the law" conferred upon Trade Unions by the Trades Disputes Act, 1906. On this ground he was therefore prepared to hold with the Master of the Rolls that it was *ultra vires*

for Trade Unions to make rules for the collection of funds for the purpose of maintaining parliamentary representation by way of compulsory contribution from members. But the Lord Justice went on to state a further reason for his decision, based on considerations of public policy. This consideration centred round the suggestion in the rules of the society that the object of the Parliamentary Fund was to procure members of Parliament who should be bound to vote in a prescribed manner and who gave an undertaking so to vote. "To my mind, such an agreement would be void as against public policy." The last of the Judges in the Court of Appeal, Lord Justice Farwell, delivered judgment to the same effect. Incidentally in the course of his judgment the Lord Justice negatived the idea that a Trade Union could carry on a trade or run a newspaper.

Such was the unanimous decision of the Court of Appeal, though, as we see, the views were "based rather on moral and social considerations than on any legal principle."¹ The Society appealed from the decision to the House of Lords acting in its judicial capacity as the highest Court of Appeal. Before that tribunal it was argued on behalf of the society that the definition in section 16 of the Act of 1876 was an enumeration, not an exhaustive enumeration, of the objects of Trade Unions; moreover, that it was not necessary to contend that parliamentary representation was one of the *objects* of a Trade Union, but that it was enough it should be one of the *methods*. As to the requirement that candidates should sign and accept the constitution of the Labour Party, the words only meant that a candidate should be a loyal member of the party.

On 21st December, 1909, the Law Lords delivered their considered judgments. The Earl of Halsbury confined his attention entirely to the question of the construction of the Trade-Union Acts 1871 and 1876. He described the Act of 1871 as the charter of incorporation of Trade Unions, and proceeded to apply the same rules to the Trade Union as apply in the case of trading corporations. It was true that the Act did not make the Trade Union a corporation, but *some* limit must be placed on its power, and this is to be found within the Statute; "it only exists as a legalised combination having power to act as a person and to enforce its rules within the limits of the statute, whatever those limits are."

¹ Slesser, *The Law relating to Trade Unions*, p. 86.

Lord Halsbury, having taken this view, refrained from pursuing the matters discussed at length in the Court of Appeal. His concluding words were: "I content myself by saying that this levy is to my mind manifestly beyond the powers possessed by a Trade Union." He was followed by Lord Macnaughten, who pointed out that the doctrine of "*ultra vires*" applied with equal force to societies formed for purposes recognised and defined by Act of Parliament. He drew an analogy between the legislation under which friendly societies and benefit building societies were established and the legislation which contains "the charter of Trade Unionism." In both cases the rules were to specify the "whole of the objects" of the society or union. These objects must be strictly within the scope of the Acts, and the powers to be used in furtherance of these objects must be "either expressly conferred or derived by reasonable implication from the provisions of the Act." The true test as to whether a rule is *ultra vires* had been laid down in an earlier case. "Does the rule merely provide a method of conducting business, or is it a rule making the society a thing different from that which is specified in the Act and meant by the Act?" He came to the conclusion that political organisation was a thing different from a combination for trade purposes and that the rules in question were *ultra vires* and illegal. He refused to discuss the constitutional question which was introduced into the case in the Court of Appeal.

The brief judgment of Lord James of Hereford is noteworthy because it is founded "upon one particular fact existing in the case." He refused to regard section 16 as an exhaustive definition and was prepared to hold that it might well be in the interests of Trade Unionism that a fund should be devoted to the payment of the expenses of a member of Parliament, but based his assenting judgment on his objection to the rule compelling such a member to accept the whip of the Labour Party. On the broader constitutional question Lord James refused to enter, as also did Lord Atkinson, who took the view that Trade Unions, at least when registered, were quasi-corporations comparable to railway companies. On this view he decided that the rules in question were *ultra vires* and that the promotion of parliamentary representation was beyond the powers conferred upon Trade Unions by the Trade Union Acts. It was Lord Shaw of Dunfermline who elaborated the "constitutional" argument; on the question

of payment of members of Parliament being *ultra vires* for a Trade Union he confessed that he was not clear in his own mind. He referred to the historical growth of Trade Unions, and said : " I have some hesitation in so construing language of statutory recognition as a definition imposing such hard-and-fast restrictive limits as would cramp the development and energies and destroy the natural movements of the living organism." Turning to the broader question, he traced the connection of Trade Unionism first with the Labour Representation Committee and then with the Labour Party ; he discussed the position of a member of Parliament supported by the contributions of the society, and expressed the view that he would be under a contract to subject his own convictions to the decisions of the parliamentary party. Regarding this he said : " I do not think that such a subjection is compatible either with the spirit of our parliamentary constitution or with that independence and freedom which have hitherto been held to lie at the basis of representative government in the United Kingdom." Having quoted Blackstone, Locke, and Burke, he pictured the peril which assailed parliamentary government " if the public well-being were liable to betrayal at the command and for the advantage of particular individuals or classes." It is interesting to note also that in the course of his judgment he foreshadowed the payment of members as a partial solution of the difficulties of representation. But he declared roundly that the Labour Party " pledge " was both unconstitutional and illegal, and on this ground he based his concurrence with the other members of the Court.

Such was the Osborne judgment. As has been pointed out by a high authority,¹ there were at least five distinct grounds given for the decision ; apart from the comparatively unimportant question of irregularity in the making of the rules, which we have not considered, there was the principal ground of these rules being *ultra vires*—i.e. beyond the powers of the society ; finally, there were the distinct grounds of public policy elaborated by each of the Law Lords who dealt with this part of the case. Criticism of the judgment was vigorous and insistent ; it was freely stated to exhibit the animus and prejudice which the Trades Disputes Act and the Labour Party had excited. Perhaps the most formidable criticism from a legal point of view is that which points to the

¹ Prof. Geldart, *The Osborne Judgment and After*.

unfairness of applying to Trade Unions tests which apply only to corporations, though Parliament had always avoided any express incorporation of Trade Unions. To adapt the doctrine of *ultra vires* in all its strictness to Trade Unions was considered an unwarrantable extension of legal theory for a particular purpose.

Again, to the mass of Trade Unionists it seemed inconceivable that the Unions should be restricted in their activities to the limited objects set out in section 16 of the Act of 1876 ; it was pointed out with some truth that Lord James of Hereford, who took part in passing this Act, expressly dissented from his colleagues on this point. The practice of the Registrars, who had consistently registered rules of Trade Unions which included in their objects and purposes all sorts of things not enumerated in the statutory definition, lent additional weight to the contention that the section was enabling and not restrictive in its operation. Moreover, the manner in which the Law Lords had included "friendly" benefits among the permissible objects of Trade Unions, i.e. by reference to succeeding sections of the Act though they were not mentioned in section 16, was considered a mere stratagem to save their decision from obvious ridicule. It was also argued that the promoting and enforcing of legislation was, historically, as much a part of Trade-Union function as maintaining a strike, and that the view of the majority of the Judges on this matter betrayed an ignorance of Trade Unionism and British industrial history. It was remarked as significant also that the Law Lords all differed one from the other and that no ground of the decision commended itself to a majority. Finally, with regard to the so-called constitutional question the Judges seemed to be usurping the functions of the Legislature, while the workmen were quick to point out that the House of Commons contained a large number of members who represented indirectly, if not directly, capitalist corporations.

Whatever may have been the correct view of the law as it thus stood, there can be no doubt that the judgment inflicted a heavy blow on Trade Unionism. It was supplemented by a later decision that the Osborne judgment covered local as well as parliamentary representation. Injunctions were subsequently obtained against twenty-two other societies which put an end to their political work. As we have seen, it was explicitly stated that Trade Unions could not carry on a newspaper, while all their educational work and their asso-

ciation in Trades Councils and even in the Trade-Union Congress were of extremely doubtful legality. It should be noted too that *unanimity* among the members of a Trade Union made no difference to the legal position ; it was nevertheless prevented from pursuing political objects. The authors of the *History of Trade Unionism* describe the situation thus : “A distinct challenge was thereby thrown down to the Trade-Union world. Not only were the activities of their Unions to be crippled, not only was their freedom to combine for whatever purposes they chose to be abrogated, they were to be expressly forbidden to aspire to protect their interests or promote their objects by Parliamentary representation, or in any way to engage in politics.”¹ Elsewhere they say : “This momentous judgment destroyed, at a blow, the peculiar legal status which Frederic Harrison had devised for Trade Unionism in 1868, and which Parliament thought that it had enacted in 1871–6.”² Another historian of the Labour Movement says : “At one stroke the financial resources of the Labour Party, or of the political activity of the Trade Unions, appeared to have been cut off.”³

During the intense political activity of the years 1910 and 1911 the effects of the judgment became more and more severely felt. We have seen⁴ how in fact the trend of events produced a kind of apathy among working-men during this period. “The Osborne judgment, by curtailing political action, tended to bring the weapon of the strike more and more into prominence.”⁵ The position was felt to be intolerable throughout the Labour Movement and a considerable agitation sprang up in favour of statutory relief. On 22nd November, 1910, the Prime Minister promised “legislation empowering Trade Unions to include in their objects and organisations the provision of a fund for parliamentary and municipal action and representation and kindred objects, and to combine for such purposes, provided that the opinion of the Union is effectively ascertained and that there shall be no compulsion upon any member to contribute to this fund.” And with a view to facilitating the reversal of the judgment, the Labour Party Conference in 1911 proceeded to remove one of the legal objections ; the “pledge” was abolished.

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 627.

² *Ibid.*, p. 610.

³ Beer, *History of British Socialism*, vol. ii, p. 342.

⁴ *Supra*, chap. ix.

⁵ Slesser, *Trade Unionism*, p. 53.

Members of Parliament were no longer to *abide* by the decision of the Parliamentary Party, but were to *maintain* the constitution and "accept the responsibilities established by parliamentary practice," while abstaining strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any other party. It should be noted also that, owing to the operation of injunctions under the Osborne judgment, the number of Trade Unions affiliated to the Labour Party had fallen, though the actual membership of the party had increased to over half a million at this date.

Nevertheless, the delay of four whole years in remedying the evil which had been wrought in the ranks of Trade Unionists by the judgment is significant of the forces at work; and there was a general suspicion that the other parties wished to put the Labour Party out of action as an independent political force. The Liberal Government introduced and enacted in 1911 a measure for the payment of members, but Trade Unionists refused to regard this as a solution of their difficulties. Moreover, the position of the Parliamentary Labour Party was unshaken, while the membership of the Party steadily grew, until in 1913 the number had reached nearly two millions. It was in that year that the Government were induced to pass into law the Trade-Union Act which gave the Trade Unions once more a measure of legal security in carrying out their work in accordance with the desires of their members. The Trade Union Act, 1913 (which represents a compromise between the demands of Trade Unionists and their opponents) is described as "An Act to amend the Law with respect to the Objects and Powers of Trade Unions." In the first clause of its first section it provides that "the fact that a combination has under its constitution objects or powers other than statutory objects *shall not prevent* the combination being a trade union," the statutory objects being the objects mentioned in section 16 of the Trade-Union Amendment Act, 1876, namely, the regulation of the relations between workmen and masters, or between workmen and workmen, or between masters and masters, or the imposing of restrictive conditions on the conduct of any trade or business. As previously stated, the Judges had held that this was a limiting and restrictive definition, and that objects not within the statute were prohibited to Trade Unions; furthermore, they expressed the opinion that a definition which permitted Trade Unions to do the particular things named in the statute, and in addi-

tion all things not in themselves illegal, would be no definition at all. That is, however, the obvious intention and meaning of this first section ; provided that the Trade Union has for its principal objects the objects set out in the definition contained in section 16, it is at liberty to pursue any other subsidiary objects not otherwise unlawful. In the words of the statute : " Such Trade Union shall have power to apply the funds of the Union for any lawful objects or purposes for the time being authorised under its constitution." This is a very wide power, and would include the application of the funds to trading purposes or the running of a newspaper ; in practice, however, the unlimited liability attaching to the members as well as other considerations has deterred the Unions from such ventures. In effect, therefore, the doctrine of *ultra vires* as applied to the political activities of Trade Unions as authorised by their rules was shattered, but with regard to political objects certain conditions are laid down in this Act. It should be observed also that the suggestion made in the course of their judgments by the Lords Justices in Osborne's case that the pursuit of objects other than those contained in the definition clause might disentitle a combination to the status of a Trade Union is directly negatived ; it is definitely enacted that such activities *shall not prevent* the combination being a Trade Union.

Another interesting feature of this clause is the addition to the definition of statutory objects of the phrase " and also the provision of benefits to members." This became necessary owing to the doubts raised in Osborne's case as to whether such an object was included within the meaning of the words " regulating the relationships between workmen and workmen." Even now the meaning is not quite clear, but the absence of the provision of benefit would not disentitle a combination to be termed a " trade union," such being the case with the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, which makes no provision in its rules for the payment of benefits, whilst a society providing benefits of the distinctive Trade Union (e.g. sick or strike pay or burial benefit) would be similarly entitled.

This section effectively demolished the main grounds adduced in support of the Osborne judgment ; no longer could the activities of Trade Unions be stultified by the general principle that societies owing their constitution and status to Acts of Parliament cannot apply their funds to objects foreign to the purposes for which they were established. The so-called

“ charter of incorporation of Trade Unions ”¹ had been indefinitely extended ; these “ quasi-corporations ” were now free to pursue political objects by political means, subject to the conditions laid down in the Act.

The second section of the Act essayed a further definition of the expression “ trade union ” as meaning “ any combination, whether temporary or permanent, the principal objects of which are under its constitution statutory objects,” and at the same time established as Trade Unions those combinations then registered as Trade Unions so long as they continued to be so registered. It has not yet been ascertained whether strike committees or any other *ad hoc* bodies would be temporary combinations within the meaning of this section and entitled to be termed “ Trade Unions.” The Registrar of Friendly Societies must not register any combination as a Trade Union unless he is satisfied, after a perusal of the objects set forth in the constitution of such a society, that the *principal* objects are statutory objects. But the Registrar is entrusted with further far-reaching powers ; it would appear that he has the right to inquire into the actual conduct of a registered Trade Union and, if satisfied that the principal objects for which the Union is actually carried on are not statutory objects, he may *withdraw* the certificate of registration granted to such a Union. Similarly, the Registrar may after inquiry grant to or withdraw from any unregistered Union a certificate that it is a Trade Union within the meaning of this Act. Provision is also made that any person aggrieved by the refusal of the Registrar to grant or withdraw a certificate may appeal to the High Court.

The restriction on the application of the funds of a Trade Union for political purposes is contained in the third section of the Act, and it should be noted that such restriction applies only to the use of Trade-Union funds ; as far as political activities not involving resort to the funds are concerned, they are unaffected by anything contained in this Act. The opening words of the section are : “ The funds of a trade union shall not be applied either directly or in conjunction with any other trade union, association, or body, or otherwise indirectly, in the furtherance of the political objects to which this section applies (without prejudice to the furtherance of any other political objects), unless the furtherance of those objects has been approved as an object of the union by a resolution for

¹ *Supra*, Lord Halsbury’s judgment.

the time being in force passed on a ballot of the members of the union taken in accordance with this Act for the purpose by a majority of the members voting." An example of the indirect furtherance of political objects would be association with a political party in running a newspaper. Rules for the taking of the ballot must be *approved* by the Registrar, but in practice the model Rules issued by the Registrar for the guidance of Trade Unions are generally followed. The statute makes it obligatory that the rules adopted by the Trade Union, whether it is registered or not, should provide :

- (a) That any payments for the political objects specified in the Act be made out of a separate fund.
- (b) That any member of the Union be exempt from any obligation to contribute to such fund if he give notice of his objection to contribute in accordance with the terms of the Act.
- (c) That no member who is exempt from the obligation to contribute be either directly or indirectly penalised by reason of his being so exempt.
- (d) That contribution to the political fund of the Union be not made a condition of entry to the Union.

The control of the separate political fund of a Union is to be in the hands of those alone who have contributed to it. It is obvious that these provisions represent a compromise between two groups. The one group sees no real reason why the ordinary democratic expedient of majority rule should not apply to the political activity of a Trade Union ; they argue that a minority of members have habitually to yield to a majority even in such a serious matter as the declaration of a strike. They point out, moreover, that even under the compromise established by this Act this body of opinion obtains the advantage attaching to the expression of corporate power. The other group emphasises the rights of the individual and the injustice of compelling him to contribute towards the furtherance of a body of political opinion with which he is in disagreement. There are, however, further safeguards in the Act for the individual member, for it is provided that any member may complain to the Registrar of Friendly Societies of any breach of the adopted rules ; and the Registrar is given full power to deal with such a grievance after giving a representative of the Union an opportunity of being heard.

The following are the political objects in pursuance of

which the Trade Union must comply with the conditions laid down by the Act. They are the expenditure of money—

(a) On the payment of any expenses incurred either directly or indirectly by a candidate or prospective candidate for election to Parliament or to any public office, before, during, or after the election in connection with his candidature or election ; or

(b) On the holding of any meeting or the distribution of any literature or documents in support of any such candidate or prospective candidate ; or

(c) On the maintenance of any person who is a member of Parliament or who holds a public office ; or

(d) In connection with the registration of electors or the selection of a candidate for Parliament or any public office ; or

(e) On the holding of political meetings of any kind, or on the distribution of political literature or political documents of any kind, unless the main purpose of the meetings or of the distribution of the literature or documents is the furtherance of statutory objects within the meaning of this Act.

The “ public office ” to which reference is made means the office of member of any public body which has power either directly or indirectly to raise money by means of a rate. Finally, a combination of Unions is made a Trade Union for the purpose of conforming with the provisions of this section, i.e. a ballot for political action must be taken for the whole of the component membership and decided according to a majority of the whole vote.

The succeeding section further provides that the ballot for the purposes of the Act shall be taken in accordance with the rules of the Union, provided that the Registrar of Friendly Societies is satisfied that they ensure to every member an equal right and, if reasonably possible, a fair opportunity of voting and that the secrecy of the ballot is properly secured. The majority of the members of a union or a majority of delegates called for the purpose can, however, waive compliance with the Rules if a certificate is obtained from the Registrar to that effect, who must, of course, satisfy himself that the fundamental requirements of equal rights, fair opportunity, and secrecy have been observed. In this matter, also, model Rules for the ballot have been prepared and approved by the Registrar.

The fifth section of the Act contains the express provision that a member of a Trade Union may at any time give notice

that he objects to contribute to the political fund of the Union. The form of such notice is set out in a schedule to the Act, but strict adherence to the form is not necessary. In the years immediately succeeding the passing of the Act, outside influences, bitter opponents of Trade-Union participation in politics, went to the expense of printing and distributing hundreds of thousands of such forms among Trade Unionists. On the adoption of a resolution approving the furtherance of political objects as an object of the Union, notice must be given to the members acquainting them that each member has a right to be exempt from contributing to the political fund of the Union, and that a form of exemption notice can be obtained by or on behalf of a member either by personal application or by post from the head office or any branch office of the Union or the office of the Registrar of Friendly Societies. This notice must be given in such manner as is approved by the Registrar having regard in each case to the existing practice and to the character of the Trade Union. When a member gives notice in accordance with the Act of his objection to contribute, he is exempt so long as his notice is not withdrawn ; his exemption nominally starts from the following January, except that if he has given notice within a month of receiving notice of the adoption of a resolution approving the furtherance of political objects he is exempt from the date of his notice.

Under the Act also a mode is prescribed for giving effect to exemption from contributions to a political fund. This can be secured either by a separate levy of contributions to such funds on the members of the Union who are not exempt, or by relieving any members who are exempt from the payment of a proportionate part of any periodical contributions required from the members of the Union towards the expenses of the Union. If the latter method be adopted, the Rules should provide that the relief be given as far as possible to all members who are exempt on the occasion of the same periodical payment ; also that members know whether or not any such periodical contribution is intended in whole or in part as a contribution to the political fund of the Union. Model Rules for a political fund have been issued by the Registrar of Friendly Societies.

In spite of the restrictive provisions contained in the Trade Union Act, 1913, its main provisions have afforded a firm basis for the political activity of the Trade Unions in

this country ; their right to pursue political aims and to indulge in all forms of political activity was expressly conceded. When the ballots were taken on the question of using Trade-Union funds for political action, overwhelming majorities were obtained in favour of such objects. So far as those members are concerned who are opposed to political action on the part of their Unions, the 1913 Act would appear to afford them ample protection, judging from the considerable number of exemptions claimed in some of the Unions.

The remarkable growth of the British Labour Party since its inception in 1900, and more especially during the years subsequent to the passing of the 1913 Act, testifies to the vital necessity for removing such legal restrictions on the political activities of Trade Unions, as, although too much importance cannot be attached to the broadening of the constitution of the Labour Party in 1918 so as to include individual members other than Trade Unionists, it still remains true that the remarkable success of the Labour Party in recent years has been mainly based on the growing political consciousness of the great mass of organised Trade Unionists. The importance of enabling the organised workers to find expression through Parliament becomes more apparent when, as the next chapter shows, the anti-Parliamentarian tendencies within the Labour Movement are powerful and ably led. It is not for want of an alternative policy that organised Labour has chosen the method of political democracy. Nor, as we shall now see, is it because the organised workers have not been strongly tempted to abandon the attempt to build an independent political party and to rely wholly on direct industrial action through the Trade Unions.

CHAPTER XII

FORCING THE PACE: DIRECT ACTION

Revolutionary Tendencies—Swing of the Pendulum—Anti-Parliamentarian Movements—Syndicalism—Industrial Unionism—Revolt against Orthodox Trade Unionism—Industrial Effects—Guild Socialism—The Strike Weapon—Political Action Vindicated.

THOUGH the opinion expressed in the concluding sentences of the preceding chapter is true, taking the history of the organised Labour Movement as a whole, it is nevertheless also the fact that at intervals the movement has wavered in its devotion to political methods as the instrument of social progress. In the years immediately preceding the War, British Trade Unionism seemed to be working up for an almost revolutionary outburst of industrial disputes. From early in 1910 right up to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, the Unions were under the control of their emotions rather than of their intelligence, and a series of impetuous strikes seriously hampered the work of the Labour Party. The chief cause of the industrial unrest was unquestionably the steady rise in prices from 1906, which more than offset the small increase of wages and created in the minds of the workpeople the conviction that they were losing ground. But there was also a ferment of new ideas in the Trade Unions, and a growth of new minority movements which were antagonistic, not only to the older forms of Trade-Union action, but to the political leadership of the parliamentary Labour Party.

In 1909 the National Executive of the Labour Party drew the attention of the workers to the fact that wages were not keeping pace with the rise in prices, and three years later this contention was confirmed by official statistics showing that in the years 1900-11 in the five principal trades—building, mining, engineering, textiles, and agriculture—the increase of wages amounted to 0·31 per cent.; the wholesale prices of food-stuffs rose by 11·6 per cent.; and the London retail

prices increased by 9.3 per cent.¹ The Parliamentary Labour Party, however, was losing some of its influence with the Trade Unions because of its failure, inevitable in the political conditions then prevailing, to impose its will upon the triumphant Liberal majority. The following passage, written by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in 1913, is an acute and penetrating analysis of this phase of the industrial unrest :

The advent of a Labour Party in Parliament had not been without its awkward consequences. Its appearance was extravagantly hailed as the dawn of the millennium. Many Trade Unionists, moreover, assumed that, with a Labour Party in Parliament, workshop agitation was no longer necessary. Legislation was to protect them in future. The party was not only to do the ordinary work of Parliament, but was to settle every workshop grievance and every industrial dispute. The party was deluged with expressions of these expectations—sometimes from aggrieved individuals, sometimes from troubled societies—and of course it could not satisfy its correspondents. Much of what they asked could not be dealt with by Parliament at all; much of what was within the function of Parliament could not be done by a House of Commons in which the Labour Party was a small minority. Whilst these extravagant expectations were being removed, a reaction away from political methods of advance was inevitable, and that reaction added force to the revolutionary and instinctive movement which was gathering from other quarters.²

What is here described as “the revolutionary and instinctive movement” found both a philosophical and a practical sanction in Syndicalism, imported from France by Mr. Tom Mann. It embodied not only the theory of producers’ control, acting through the organisations of their own creation, namely the Trade Unions, but the method of direct action by means of the general strike. It repudiated the idea of parliamentary democracy, on the ground that outside the workshop and the factory the workmen hold divergent political opinions which render mass action difficult if not impossible. Only in the workshop is there a sense of solidarity, overriding all minor differences. And whilst the political party is not and cannot be a purely class organisation, the Trade Union is immune from the corrupting and enfeebling influences of middle-class leaders, and can be inspired with the revolutionary *élan* by

¹ Fifteenth Abstract of Labour Statistics of the U.K. [Cd. 6228, 1912], quoted by Max Beer, *History of British Socialism*, vol. ii, p. 350.

² *The Social Unrest*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald, p. 94.



SMALL BEGINNINGS LABOUR PARTY OFFICE STAFF, 1912.

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a militant minority. The growing dissatisfaction of the rank and file of the Trade Unions with the work of the Parliamentary Labour Party supplied the British Syndicalist leaders with their opportunity, and from the early years of the century may be witnessed the multiplication of new organisations brought into existence to further the ideal of workers' control and to quicken the pace of social revolution.

In 1903 the secession of the Socialist Labour Party from the Social Democratic Federation marked the emergence of the new spirit; but it remained for James Connolly, the Irish Labour leader who was executed in 1916 for his share in the Easter rebellion in Ireland, to give the new movement a vigorous life on the Clyde in 1905. A few years later Tom Mann lent it the aid of his robust eloquence and whirlwind energy, and from 1910 onwards Syndicalism and industrial unionism can be seen fermenting, chiefly in the Clyde district and among the South Wales miners, as the animating principle of the minority movement among the Trade Unions. Since the year 1908 the revolt against orthodox Trade Unionism had been growing, and it was fed both with ideas and with leaders by such bodies as the Plebs League formed about that time by a group of Labour students at Ruskin College, Oxford, and by the Labour College in London which these students were instrumental in bringing into existence, helped as to funds in later years by the South Wales Miners' Federation and the National Union of Railwaymen. This educational movement was perhaps the most potent single influence in the industrial unrest of this period. It lay quite outside the range of the authority possessed by the political leaders within the Trade Union movement.

The first mutterings of the coming storm could be heard in the beginning of 1910, when trouble arose among the Northumberland miners, 30,000 of whom struck work in protest against the general conditions to be observed in the coalfield under the Coal Mines Regulation Act. It was a strike against authority. The regulations which it was proposed to apply had been agreed upon by the miners' leaders, and endorsed by the miners' lodges. Though some of the strikers returned, many thousands were out at the end of January, chiefly because they were determined not to accept the methods of working the three-shift system in place of the two-shift system; they remained out even after the executive of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain urged them to

honour the agreement and resume work. The deadlock continued after a ballot had been taken on a proposal to resume work, and it was finally brought to an end only by the intervention of the "industrial peace-maker" Mr. (now Lord) Askwith, then in charge of the Statistical, Commercial, and Labour departments of the Board of Trade.

This dispute was the first of a series which raised the total for that year higher than in any previous year since 1893. It is significant that wage questions affected only 20 per cent. of the workpeople directly involved in these disputes.¹ Many, if not most of them, were the work of young men, and were caused by the refusal of the rank and file to follow the advice of their recognised leaders. One big quarrel was precipitated by the employers who locked out the members of the Boilermakers' Society, alleging breach of agreement and accusing the union leaders of being unable to enforce discipline upon their followers. Another, a strike of 10,000 mine-workers at the Cambrian Combine collieries in the Rhondda Valley, lasting for more than a year, was the forerunner of the bitter struggle of 1911. This dispute arose out of the refusal of the Welsh coal-owners to entertain one of the proposals made earlier in the year, when the Conciliation Board was formed, to pay a fixed wage for men employed in "abnormal places." It assumed a serious aspect when police and military were drafted into the area to maintain order. It continued long after the M.F.G.B. had withdrawn financial support from the strikers. The tenacity and bitterness displayed during its course gave point to Mr. Philip Snowden's summing up of the situation, in a passage quoted by Lord Askwith :

The year 1910 has been an exceedingly trying time for all who have any responsibility for the management of Trade Unions and the direction of the Labour Movement. The men connected with a number of important Trade Unions have shown a good deal of dissatisfaction with the actions of their responsible officials, and this dissatisfaction has expressed itself in some cases in rebellion against the agreements entered into by the Union Executive and in unauthorised strikes. Trouble of this sort has been chiefly active in the North-East of England, on the Clyde, and in South Wales. On the North-Eastern Railway, a matter of the most trivial character was made the excuse for the men in a Newcastle goods yard to stop work, and this immediately led to a general

¹ *Industrial Problems and Disputes*, by Lord Askwith, p. 134.

cession, which for a few days paralysed the railway system. This unauthorised and spontaneous action on the men's part was a way of expressing their general discontent. The company conceded the immediate demands of the men, so that their action in taking matters into their own hands and overriding the authority of the Union Executive may, like the action of the locked out boilermakers, be considered to have been justified by its success. But victories of this sort may be bought too dearly. Discipline in trade unionism is too vital a thing to be injured by violation, and, though an occasional irresponsible movement may succeed, such a practice must, if frequently adopted, be destructive of collective bargaining and of trade unionism itself; for no executive could retain office if its authority were not respected.¹

Mr. Snowden went on to point out that the trouble which the Trade-Union leaders had to face was shared to some extent by the leaders of the political Labour Movement. A minority in the Independent Labour Party had been actively endeavouring to foment opposition to the Parliamentary Labour Party, though he did not think the Labour candidates in the General Election at the beginning of 1910 had suffered much from this internal criticism, "which is evidently much more noisy than influential." And Mr. Snowden concluded his review of the year 1910 by saying that the year then opening was likely to be even more momentous :

There is trouble brewing in a number of trades which may break out into open hostilities. Labour has become aggressive, and is not merely opposing attack, but is determined upon advances.

The trouble was that at this time the Labour Movement deserved the gibe aimed by Mr. G. K. Chesterton at the progressive movement generally, that it was advancing at once in all directions! The political leaders, struggling with a parliamentary situation of unexampled difficulty—for Liberalism was then in its heyday, flushed with battle against the House of Lords, whilst the Conservatives were becoming as violent and lawless in their prosecution of the Ulster claims as the most ruthless revolutionary group in pursuit of the class war—strove to impress Parliament with the inner meaning of the revolt. The recognised Trade Union leaders sought to keep the revolt within bounds of discipline and constitutional action. But as the industrial convulsion grew more violent,

¹ *Industrial Problems and Disputes*, by Lord Askwith, pp. 145-6.

the authority both of the Trade Union and the political leaders weakened. The whole country, indeed, seemed to have become a prey to the wildest and most extreme passions that can beset a nation ; it was a time in which the King himself was constrained, in opening the Buckingham Palace conference on the Ulster question, to say :

The trend has been surely and steadily towards an appeal to force, and to-day the cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober of my people.

Militancy among the women agitating for the suffrage, drilling and arming in Ireland, and strikes of a number and magnitude never before known, had brought the country, when these words were spoken, to the edge of the precipice.

The severity of the industrial crisis can be measured to some extent by the statement that the number of disputes reported to the Labour Department, which had sunk in 1908 to only 399, rose in 1911 to 903, and culminated in the latter half of 1913 and the first half of 1914 in the outbreak of something like one hundred and fifty strikes a month.¹ The impatience of the younger generation, and their distrust of the older leaders whose reliance was mainly upon parliamentary action, found expression not only in numerous local strikes, but in organised national stoppages of the most vital industries and services.

The first of these was the general strike of seamen and transport workers in the summer of 1911. It started at Southampton and spread rapidly to the principal ports. Employers marked as a strange and terrifying feature of this outbreak that it was led by men unknown before. It lasted from 14th June to 11th August. On the latter date the general strike in London came to an end—the stoppages in Southampton, Hull, Goole, Manchester, and other centres having terminated a little before ; but not until the authorities had become thoroughly alarmed, and were drafting police and military into the ports. In the Manchester stoppage eighteen unions bound themselves to remain out until all were satisfied. In London a serious state of affairs was created by the stoppage of supplies, and isolated cases of disorder—though these were conspicuously few throughout the country—caused the Home

¹ *History of Trade Unionism*, revised (1920), ed. by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, p. 690.

Office and War Office to begin making plans to bring troops into the metropolitan area.¹

Before the transport strike ended, the 1911 railway strike began. It started with the railwaymen at Liverpool on 5th August, and on the 15th the executives of the railwaymen's Unions issued a 24-hours ultimatum threatening a national stoppage unless the companies were prepared immediately to meet representatives of these organisations "to negotiate a basis of settlement of the matters in dispute affecting the various grades." The threat was met by the Government's proposal to refer the issues in dispute to a Royal Commission. The manner in which this proposal was put to the railwaymen by the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, was interpreted by them as a counter-ultimatum, and they immediately proceeded to put the strike machinery in motion. Within a few hours the stoppage was complete. The companies were obdurate in their refusal to "recognise" the Unions, whilst the latter absolutely refused to come to terms until their representatives met the companies' managers face to face. On the men's side, the chief agent in promoting a better state of feeling was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who used every ounce of his parliamentary and personal influence to effect a settlement. It was at this time that the Morocco crisis assumed a menacing aspect through the despatch of the German gunboat, *Panther*, to Agadir; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, made skilful use of this incident, both with the companies and the Unions, to induce them to come to terms: he succeeded in getting the companies to agree to their representatives meeting representatives of the Union executives to discuss proposals for a settlement drafted by the Board of Trade, and as a result an agreement was reached on 19th August. The Royal Commission was set up, and reported on 18th October. The result was not satisfactory to the Unions, and it was not until the end of the year that the dispute finally closed, the Unions having won "recognition" and established the principle of collective bargaining with the companies as a body.

This strike had a curious sequel in the history of the Labour Party, when the British Socialist Party applied for separate affiliation to the International Socialist Bureau, and denounced the Labour Party to the International Socialist leaders as a non-Socialist body which had refused to take action in support

¹ *Industrial Problems and Disputes*, by Lord Askwith, p. 135.

of the strikers in the railway dispute of 1911 and the miners' national stoppage of the following year. The reply of the party leaders was immediate and crushing. They pointed out that in the strike of the railwaymen, the miners, and later of the transport workers, they were constantly in communication with the Unions concerned and their action in the House of Commons was taken in co-operation with the Unions. In proof of this, the following resolution passed by the joint executive of the railway Unions was quoted in the party's annual report :

That this joint conference tender our best thanks to Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., and his colleagues (Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., and Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P.) for the very painstaking and laborious efforts in bringing about the settlement, feeling confident no better efforts could have been made.

From the Miners Federation of Great Britain a letter was received, by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, signed by Mr. Thomas Ashton, the Federation secretary :

DEAR MACDONALD,—I am instructed by the executive committee and all the delegates at conference to-day to convey to you and the Labour Party their very best thanks for the great assistance the party has given to the Federation in their endeavours to improve the Minimum Wage Bill.

Strikes of tramwaymen in Liverpool, carters and dockers at Dundee, cotton operatives in Lancashire, dockers in Glasgow, signalled these two big national stoppages of 1912, involving the miners and the transport workers. The miners' demand was for a minimum wage, for all men and boys working in the mines without regard to the question whether their working places were "abnormal" or otherwise. When the South Wales coal-owners refused to discuss the demand, a national strike became inevitable, for the whole of the coalfields had by this time been brought to the point of acting together and not sectionally as hitherto. Over a million miners ceased work, more or less simultaneously, and the struggle continued for a month before it was brought to an end by the Government producing a Minimum Wage Bill. Acting in the closest association with the miners, the Labour Party in Parliament fought hard for the inclusion in this Bill of a precise figure for the minimum wage (5s. a day for men, and 2s. for boys).

The Government, however, insisted that the amount of the minimum wage must be fixed for each district by a joint board set up under the auspices of the Board of Trade; and the Labour Party, guided by the decision of the miners in conference, voted against the third reading of the Bill. It was carried by 213 votes to 48; and although a majority of the miners actually voted in the ballot to continue the strike, the dispute was ultimately settled on the basis of the Government's proposals in the Bill.

It was in the miners' strike that the ferment of the new ideas in the Trade-Union movement forced itself upon the public attention. Journals, pamphlets, and flyers appeared in great profusion at this time, all advocating the use of the Trade Unions as the instrument of revolutionary action, not only against the employers, but against the Government as the executive of the possessing class. The publication which attracted most notice was the pamphlet written for and issued by an active group of the younger miners' leaders in South Wales, with the title of *The Miners' Next Step*; but other publications, such as *The Syndicalist*, *The Transport Worker*, and *The Syndicalist Railwaymen*, expressed the same philosophy of violence and preached the relentless prosecution of the class war by the organised workers.

To the political leaders these conceptions of working-class aims and methods were futile and dangerous excesses, subversive of all they were trying to accomplish through the Labour Party. They recognised that the industrial unrest had its roots in the "deplorable insufficiency of wages," which had persisted "notwithstanding a great expansion of national wealth and a considerable increase in the cost of living."¹ They maintained, as we have seen, the closest possible touch with the Union leaders, and did their best to give expression to Trade-Union views whenever the industrial disputes came before Parliament. In the later stages of the transport workers' struggle, the party even had a representative on the strike committee which conducted the Port of London strike—his duties being to keep the political leaders informed of developments and to convey to the strike committee the parliamentary leaders' views. But the attitude of the political leaders was profoundly hostile to the idea of direct action by the Trade Unions as a means of securing the overthrow

¹ Labour amendment to a Liberal motion in the House of Commons on Industrial Unrest, 1912.

of the capitalist system and establishing control of production by the workers.

Undoubtedly, the patience, intellectual ability, and power of leadership possessed by those at the head of the political organisation of the workers prevented an irrevocable schism between it and the industrial organisation as the latter fell more and more under the influence of the new school of Trade-Union leader. Both sides found their views both of economic organisation and working-class action sensibly modified by the rise of the Guild Socialist movement. The significance of this movement in the history of the Labour Party lies largely in the function of reconciliation it has filled between the Collectivist and Syndicalist schools of thought. It has given to the ideal of workers' control at once a fuller and more precise meaning than either the Syndicalists claimed or the Collectivists were ready to concede. In this phase of the working-class history, the education of the Labour mind was carried on by *The New Age* and by the very able group of writers who gathered about *The Daily Herald*. It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe the course taken by the controversy, but simply to indicate the change of thought and direction that took place, under the influence of the Guild Socialists, in the Labour and Socialist Movement at this time.¹ The absolute antinomy between political action and direct industrial action was thereby prevented from developing, and the way became clear for the harmonious and orderly co-ordination of the two wings of the working-class movement which engaged the attention of the parliamentary and industrial leaders after the war.

Up to the outbreak of war Trade Unionism continued to think of the strike not, as formerly, as the culminating incident in the failure to reach agreement by the method of collective bargaining, but as a means of forcing the pace of economic revolution. In some degree this conception is kept alive to-day by the advocates and apologists of Bolshevik principles and practices; and to that extent the temper and outlook of the period of industrial unrest in this country between 1910 and 1914 can be said to have been reproduced by the Communists between 1919 and 1924. But, organised propaganda apart, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that to-day

¹ The mature fruit of the new teaching is to be found in the chapter on "The Principles of Industrial Reconstruction," contributed by Mr. G. D. H. Cole to the second volume of this work.

we are witnessing a popular reaction against Marxism, whereas in the pre-war period of industrial unrest we saw a popular enthusiasm for it. The use of the strike for purely political purposes commands now a much less ready assent among Trade Unionists. Left-wing movements still arise to challenge the ideal of parliamentary democracy with which the British Labour and Socialist Movement has consciously identified itself. But the popular convulsions described in this chapter passed into a far more terrible convulsion in 1914, and the crisis left the Labour Movement shaken and exhausted.

It closed a distinct phase not only of Labour, but of national history. It is one of the paradoxes of this period that the Government was forced more and more to concern itself with industrial affairs, to "recognise" the Trade Unions even more fully than the employers. The industrial unrest educated Ministers and the country at large quite as much as it did the leaders of the Trade Unions, and brought the political representatives of Labour back into closer association with the rank and file. The need for a coherent, continuous, and co-ordinating policy then became apparent, and subsequent events in the direction of reorganisation and consolidation presently to be described were mainly the working out of lessons learned in the period of turmoil and strife which culminated in the War.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THE LABOUR PARTY MET THE WAR

Divided Counsels—Pre-war Diplomacy—Political and Industrial Truce—Internal Differences—Inter-allied Socialist Conferences—Recruiting and Conscription—Coalition Governments—The International—Stockholm Conference—Mr. Henderson's Position—Resignation from Government—War Emergency, Workers' National Committee.

THE first three years of war were the dark days of Labour Party history—days of divided counsel and divided loyalty to principles and leaders. The party was submerged in the nation at war, and but for the continued assertion of its troubled conscience from time to time—the proof of its vitality—it might have been submerged for ever with the Liberal Party in the Great War Coalition, never to rise again.

The major conflict began in differences of opinion as to how the War came; it broadened into a dispute as to how the War should end and when it should end. The minority urged that the peace terms would be written in a treaty of peace; that the outline of a treaty of peace already existed in the dossiers of the diplomats or was being made in secret as the men fought. They suggested international action to compel the Governments to declare the terms upon which they would make peace. The party as a whole would not abide any questions about the right moment to make peace. They fought for Victory.

On the 5th August, 1914, the first day of war—but when the dimensions and dangers of the world war were not foreseen—the Executive Committee of the party adopted a resolution, which was endorsed unanimously two days later by the Parliamentary Party, reiterating the fact that the Labour Movement had “opposed the policy which had produced the War—the policy of maintaining by understandings with France and Russia a balance of power which was bound to increase the

power of Russia in Europe and Asia and endanger good relations with Germany." It called attention to the proved facts that Sir Edward Grey, without the knowledge of our people, had committed the honour of the country to supporting France, and had given definite assurances of support before the House of Commons had had any chance of considering the matter. The duty of the Movement now was "to secure peace at the earliest possible moment on such conditions as will provide the best opportunities for the re-establishment of amicable feelings between the workers of Europe." In a few days (6th August) Mr. Asquith asked for the first War Credit of £100,000,000. Mr. MacDonald wished to make a speech in conformity with the policy of the party as already declared. It was found, however, that he could no longer speak for a united party. The majority was of opinion that no statement should be made. Mr. MacDonald resigned, and Mr. Henderson became Chairman; a breach was created in the unity of the party; and, as far as the masses of the rank and file of the party were concerned, they became one with the people in their apprehension of the national danger and the need for a national war effort.

Labour's first thought at the beginning of the crisis was for those who might be thrown into distress because of the War. Great Britain declared war on 4th August. On the following day, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Arthur Henderson, a representative Conference meeting in London set up the War Emergency Workers' National Committee, composed of representative members of the Trades Union Congress, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the Labour Party, miners, railway workers, textile workers, transport workers, teachers, Co-operative Movement, and the Socialist Party, with Mr. J. S. Middleton as Secretary. The general industrial and social outlook was examined and a programme of recommendations issued with a view to the prevention of unemployment, purchase, storage, and distribution of food by public authorities, fixing of maximum prices, provision of meals for school children, and the supply of milk to nursing mothers, infants, young children, and sick people.

The Industrial Truce was declared by the two National Committees of the Trade Unions on 24th August, and by the end of December very few disputes were in progress. During the last five months of 1914 only 23,000 workers were

involved in trade disputes. The Political Truce—an agreement that there should be no contested by-elections, seats becoming vacant to be retained by the party to which the late member belonged—was made on 29th August and renewed from time to time until the War came to an end. At the same time the Executive Committee of the Labour Party agreed by a majority to the use of the party organisation for the purpose of enlisting recruits. Local affiliated bodies were to render all possible local support in the recruiting campaign.

The Trades Union Congress which ought to have met in September was postponed, and on 3rd September their Parliamentary Committee issued a manifesto to the Trade Unionists of the country. This manifesto was the first considered war pronouncement of the majority opinion in the Labour Movement since the Labour Party's resolution on 5th August. It revealed the change in mood and temper which organised Labour had undergone in that period in common with the whole nation. It expressed gratification at the manner in which the Labour Party had responded to the appeal to all political parties "to give their co-operation in securing the enlistment of men to defend the interests of their country." In the event of the voluntary system of service failing, the demand for compulsory service might become irresistible. It was the opinion of the Committee that the prospect of having to face conscription should stimulate the manhood of the nation to come forward. Another factor which Trade Unionists were asked to remember was that the preservation and maintenance of free and unfettered democratic government in this country would depend upon the result of the War. It concluded by reminding the State of its duty to make reasonable and assured recompense to the citizens who were prepared to make sacrifices in its defence and for the maintenance of its honour.

On 15th October it was thought necessary "to clear away, once for all, misconceptions which had been circulated as to the attitude of the British Labour Movement." A manifesto was issued, signed by most of the Labour Members of Parliament, by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, by the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trade Unions, and by other Labour leaders. The argument of the Parliamentary Committee was repeated, and the outbreak of war was "attributed to the deliberate

act of the ruler of the Empire of Germany." Germany aspired to become the dominant military power of Europe "with the Kaiser the Dictator over all." If England had not kept her pledges to Belgium, German victory would have been probable.

The victory of Germany would mean the death of democracy in Europe. . . . Until the power which has pillaged and outraged Belgium and the Belgians and plunged nearly the whole of Europe into the awful misery, suffering, and horror of war is beaten there can be no peace. . . . When the time comes to discuss the terms of peace the Labour Movement will stand, as it has always stood, for an international agreement among all civilised nations that disputes and misunderstandings in the future shall be settled not by machine guns, but by arbitration.

No other political ends to be subserved by the victory were revealed on 15th February, 1915, when the British section of the International brought together the Labour and Socialist Parties of France, Belgium, and Russia. In London this Inter-Allied Socialist Conference was clearly concerned to prove that in their common attitude to the War they remained true to the principles of the International. Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., was chairman of this Conference and the Labour Party and the three British Socialist organisations were each represented in their own right. None voted against the resolution which noted the profound general causes of the conflict in which every Government had its share of responsibility. With regard to the immediate causes the resolution declared that :

The invasion of Belgium and France by the German armies threatens the very existence of independent nationalities, and strikes a blow at all faith in treaties. In these circumstances victory for German imperialism would be the defeat and the destruction of democracy and liberty in Europe.

Then came a specific declaration of the political objects of the war or "War Aims," the first of a long series, produced by the Socialist Parties of Europe. Firstly, there was a hint of reparations : "the demand that Belgium shall be liberated and compensated." Then the principle of self-determination was affirmed ; they desired that the question of Poland should be settled in the sense of autonomy or independence and that

all those populations that had been annexed by force from Alsace-Lorraine to the Balkans should receive the right freely to dispose of themselves. At the conclusion of the War the working-classes would unite

in order to suppress secret diplomacy, put an end to the interests of militarism and those of the armament makers and establish some international authority to settle points of difference among the nations, by compulsory conciliation and arbitration and to compel all nations to maintain peace.

Two delegates at the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference were ministers in their respective Governments of "National Defence": M. Vandervelde, Belgium, and M. Marcel Sembat, France. When foreign armies were fighting on the soil of France and Belgium, the French and Belgian Labour Parties showed no hesitation in their decision that their duties as citizens, when national existence was threatened, were superior to their obligations as international socialists, to co-operate with the bourgeois in the work of the Government. The British Labour Party had to face the same issue a few months later in a more complex situation. On 19th May, 1915, the National Executive of the party and the Labour members of Parliament, meeting separately, had to consider whether they should accept an invitation to join the Coalition Government with the Liberal and Conservative Parties, their two historical political rivals. The Labour Party's independent political action was the very principle of the Labour Party's existence. The members of Parliament doubted whether the invitation could be accepted without the authority of a National Conference. There was also opposition on grounds of expediency, and not only from those who had not pledged themselves to do their utmost to "win the War"; the loss of independence and the responsibility of the party for the acts of the Government would be real; its power, the power of the ministerial representatives of a party of 40 in a Parliament of 670, would be doubtful; their representatives would be hardly more than hostages of Labour; they would not have access to the inner councils of war nor be informed of grave diplomatic and military decisions, but the responsibility of refusal could not be lightly considered. The nation was united in the making of war. The *morale* of the civilian population had become a military factor. Party

political calculations were not in tune with the spirit of the time and the National Executive agreed by a majority to accept the invitation. Later at a joint meeting this decision was endorsed and the Coalition Government was formed. The Right Hon. A. Henderson, M.P., became President of the Board of Education with a seat in the Cabinet, Mr. W. Brace, M.P., Under-Secretary for Home Affairs, and Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Junior Lord of the Treasury. The Trades Union Congress meeting at Bristol in September, 1915, enabled the country to read the pulse of the Labour Movement. It was beating in time with the heart of the nation.

But to support the Government in the prosecution of the War did not mean the suspension of judgment and criticism even when ministerial responsibility had been accepted. This became clear when the conscription controversy developed in an acute form. It was the argument of the conscriptionists that men should be compelled to fight. As British Labour had met the War as a democracy face to face with a military autocracy, conscription was to them the very symbol of militarism. Neither the Trades Union Congress nor the Labour Party ever pursued the logic of war so far as to accept the paradoxical situation in which they were asked to adopt the system which it was their purpose to destroy, in order to destroy it elsewhere.

Their attitude in this respect is unique among Labour and Socialist Parties. From the British Labour standpoint conscription is a denial of personal freedom; from the Continental Socialist standpoint voluntaryism is a denial of the principle of equality. When British Labour finally agreed not to agitate for the repeal of the Compulsory Service Acts, they made the greatest of their sacrifices of principle to "win the War."

To preserve the voluntary system, Labour went recruiting with the Liberals and Tories. As they became more and more impressed with the national danger, they conducted a special recruiting effort on Labour platforms throughout the Labour Movement in the autumn of 1915. This was done at the special invitation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, and the Minister for War, Lord Kitchener. They suggested to the Government, however, that voluntary recruiting would be more successful if the Government would state frankly what had already been done by voluntary means and remained to be done, and would insist that employers should not prevent

their men from enlisting. Lord Derby was given the responsibility of making a supreme effort to secure the number of men required. The Prime Minister, during Lord Derby's campaign, gave a pledge that single men would have to join first, in order to induce married men to attest. Naturally married men in large numbers waited for the single men to attest, and when the campaign was over Lord Derby claimed—although his calculations were disputed—that over 600,000 single men failed to respond.

To redeem Mr. Asquith's pledge, the Government introduced a Bill to compel those single men to attest, and Labour called a special National Congress, representative of the whole Movement, industrial and political, to consider this grave situation. This Conference, which met on 6th January, 1916, was asked to support a measure of compulsion for single men, but only one-fifth of the votes in the Conference went in support of this resolution. The three National Committees had suggested that Labour members should be free to vote upon the Bill as they individually thought fit. But the Conference, after debate, recommended the Parliamentary Party to oppose the measure in all its stages—a policy which was adopted by 1,998,000 votes against 783,000. The three Labour Ministers tendered their resignation. Mr. Asquith then sought a consultation with the Party Executive, which took place at the House of Commons on 12th January. Assurances were then given by the Prime Minister that there would be no extension of compulsion to married men; that the Bill was to operate during the War only; that amendments would be introduced obviating any possibility of industrial compulsion; that the Tribunals would be Civilian and not Military Courts; and that an opportunity would be afforded to Parliament to strengthen the clause exempting Conscientious Objectors. The resignations of the Labour Ministers were withdrawn pending discussion at the forthcoming Annual Conference of the Party.

Before that Conference had met, the Second Reading of the Military Service Bill had been carried on 12th January, by 433 votes against 41 (including tellers). The minority included 30 Liberals, 10 Labour members, and 1 Irish Nationalist.

The Labour Party Conference which met at Bristol, 26th-28th January, 1916, failed to make a final and conclusive declaration. With an overwhelming majority, the adoption



LABOUR'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER.
Mr Clifford Allen and Staff at work.

of conscription in any form was denounced. Opposition to the Military Service Bill was voted by a majority of 1,716,000 votes against 360,000. But when the Conference was asked to agree to agitate for the repeal of the Bill, there voted for 614,000, and against 649,000, about one million votes being withheld.

The Conference confirmed the action of the party in joining the Coalition, and, by 1,622,000 votes against 495,000, expressed the opinion that the best interests of the nation would be served by the party remaining in the Coalition. It was argued that if joining the Coalition had been a mistake, to withdraw would be a greater blunder. It would strike at the hearts of their Allies, and encourage the enemy.

Four months later (April 1916), the Party had to consider if they should agree to an extension of the principle of compulsion to married men. A secret session of Parliament was held at their suggestion, with the object of giving Parliament fuller information on the situation, and the party finally came to the conclusion that members should have a free hand. Both the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trade Unions and the General Council had supported the new proposals in view of promises given that the legislation would automatically become void on the signing of peace. Members of the party made efforts to ensure that military conscription would not be used as an indirect means of coercion against workmen or industrial compulsion.

In December 1916, Mr. Lloyd George precipitated a political crisis. Mr. Asquith resigned the office of Prime Minister and his decision carried with it the resignations of all the members of the Ministry. Opinion within the ranks of the Labour Movement was unanimous against the methods by which the coalition was destroyed, and Mr. Asquith deposed. Nevertheless, the Executive of the Parliamentary Party held that the national interest, and the possibility of Labour securing a greater opportunity of moulding policy and exercising executive authority in important administrative posts, could not be ignored. They decided by a majority vote that Mr. Lloyd George's invitation to the party to associate itself with the new Administration should be accepted. Mr. Henderson became a member of the War Cabinet, Mr. John Hodge, Minister of Labour, Mr. George N. Barnes, Minister of Pensions, Mr. W. Brace, Under-Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr. G. H. Roberts, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, and

Mr. J. Parker, Junior Lord of the Admiralty. This was, in a sense, a new assertion of Labour's independence of Liberalism. It was endorsed at the Party Conference (Manchester, January 1917) by 1,849,000 votes against 307,000. It may also be inferred that Mr. Lloyd George's promise to institute State Control of Mines and Shipping and take strong action in respect to distribution of food had a certain influence on the decision of the party.

It was revealed in the debate that the invitation to Labour to join the first Coalition had not appeared to Mr. Clynes then to be worth the great responsibility, but the political and military situation had changed vastly in this period. Mr. Clynes voted against the first Coalition and in favour of the second Coalition. This is an indication how the Labour Party's will to resist the enemy hardened as the nation's military fortunes became more and more uncertain. The resolution to demand of the Government that "it declares its readiness to enter into immediate negotiations for peace" was rejected at this Conference by 1,697,000 votes against 302,000.

The next development was the giving of a human and political definition to the idea of "victory." Labour began to visualise the struggle as one that was being waged on two fronts—the military and the diplomatic fronts. If the working-class parties in the warring countries could agree upon the conditions of peace, and could persuade their Governments to accept them, this revolution in thought would enable the War to end and a military decision to be postponed. If agreement proved impossible through the fault of Governments or parties, International Labour would have discovered a fresh test of aggression, and given other Governments and parties a moral justification for continuing the War.

The bond uniting the working-class parties was the International. It comprised 27 parties, with a total membership of 12,000,000. War destroyed the International as it destroyed the Church in the sense that the International could not meet so long as its component parts refused to come together. It was the function of the International Bureau to bring them together, but Mr. Camille Huysmans, the Secretary, who was the point of contact, would only summon a meeting of the Bureau with the assent of all. Mr. Huysmans had gone to the Hague, and with Mr. Vandervelde proposed, in agreement with his committee, that the national delegations should come separately to the Hague, so that the Executive

Committee could discuss with each delegation the general situation, and also the particular position of each one of them. Germany came officially once and then a second time. France would not come, as they considered that this would be equivalent to indirect negotiations with the Germans while German armies were on French soil. The British Section (Labour Party, I.L.P., and B.S.P.) agreed that Mr. MacDonald should go and represent their varying views. Finally Mr. Vandervelde and Mr. Huysmans were asked to come to London. They came early in 1916, and they invited the various sections to express their views on the eventual conditions of peace and forward them to the Bureau for their information. The Labour Party refused. They thought it would create misunderstandings in the mind of the enemy as to the attitude of the British working-classes towards the War. The only thing with which they would concern themselves was the prosecution of the War to victorious termination.

At Birmingham, in September 1916, the Trades Union Congress declined by a two-thirds majority even to contemplate the holding of an International Trades Union Congress at the same time and place as the meeting of the peace plenipotentiaries. The I.L.P. urged the Labour Party Conference (Manchester, January 1917) to press for the summoning of the Bureau with a view to the speedy reconstitution of the International and the calling together of the International Socialist Congress simultaneously with the Peace Congress. The Labour Party Conference (Manchester, January 1917) would only agree to a fight till victory, and an Allied Conference meeting simultaneously with the Peace Congress. Meanwhile, a Conference of neutral Socialists had met at Copenhagen, January 1915, the Allied Socialists had met as we have seen in London, February 1915, and the Socialists of the Central powers at Vienna during April 1915, and the I.L.P. and Fabian Society, but not the Labour Party, had forwarded their "War Aims" to the International.

During the early part of 1917 Mr. Camille Huysmans had removed the centre of his mediatory influence to Stockholm, where a Dutch-Scandinavian Committee was constituted under the Presidency of Mr. Hjalmar Branting. This Committee had many consultations with delegates of various nationalities engaged in the War. In May 1917, they invited the British section of the International, but the Labour Party would not go.

They decided, however, to convoke another Inter-Allied Conference in June, with the participation if possible of the American Federation of Labour, the United States having now come into the War; but the arrangements for this Conference had to be suspended almost at once as the Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' deputies, acting as the organ of the revolutionary purposes of the Russian Revolution, announced their intention to invite the Socialists and Labour Parties of all countries to formulate a general working-class peace policy in an International Congress. The I.L.P. appointed Mr. J. R. MacDonald and Mr. F. W. Jowett, and the Labour Party Mr. G. H. Roberts and Mr. W. Carter, to go to Stockholm to obtain further information with regard to the intentions of their Russian friends. The call of the Russian Revolution could not be denied; International Labour had waited and worked and longed for it. The seamen declined to carry the Ambassadors of British Labour to the Russian Revolution. But Mr. Lloyd George, at that moment, had some measure of appreciation of the significance of events and asked Mr. Henderson to go to Russia on an official mission. On the 11th July, 1917, as Mr. Henderson was on his way home, the Russian invitation to an International Conference of the Socialist World at Stockholm on the 15th August, to pave the way for the end of the conflict, was published.

This invitation was issued by an Organising Bureau composed of delegates of the Russian and Dutch-Scandinavian Committees. It was, therefore, really an invitation from the Secretary of the International, from the Dutch, Swedish, and Danish parties, as well as from the Russian Social Revolutionary Party, the Social Democratic Party (Mensheviks), and the Jewish Bund. All the Russian Socialist Parties belonged to the Anti-War group of Socialists, including the Russian Bolsheviks, who had held two conferences at Zimmerwald and Keinthal, and had created a Commission at Berne. This Commission refused to co-operate in the preliminary work of the Stockholm Conference. The Organising Bureau proposed to follow the procedure of the pre-war International as regards both admissions and the allocation of votes, to invite majorities and minorities of parties as well as the oppositions which, as in Germany for example, had formed themselves into distinct parties.

This invitation was at once given world-wide significance by the declaration of Mr. Henderson, Labour member of the

British War Cabinet, before leaving Petrograd, and again at Stockholm on the 17th July, that he was now fully convinced of the desirability of such a conference under specified conditions. From that moment the eyes of Europe were turned towards Stockholm, and to the British Press Mr. Henderson now became a malign pro-German influence within the ranks of the Allies. Either Mr. Henderson was in agreement with his Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, in his support of the Stockholm idea, or not; if he was in agreement, the Stockholm Conference was recognised by the Allies as an important diplomatic move: if he was not in agreement, Mr. Henderson's statement threatened a political crisis.

When Mr. Henderson arrived in London, at the same time as four members of the Russian Delegation (Messrs. Rousanoff, Erlich, Smirnoff, and Goldenberg) consultations with the Party Executive were immediately arranged. The Russian delegates made it abundantly clear that the Conference would be held whether the Labour Party decided to be represented or not, and that there were important reasons in the Russian military and political situation for its being convened without delay. The Executive agreed by a majority—a new majority—to accept the invitation with reservations. The Labour Party preferred that the Conference should be an *ad-hoc* meeting under its own rules, and not an ordinary International Congress under rules which would exclude the American Federation of Labour, and allocate half the British votes to the British Socialist Parties. The Russians contemplated that the Conference would frame a peace programme which would be binding upon majorities and minorities in the Conference; but the Labour Party would not agree to more than a consultative Conference which would not adopt resolutions of a binding character. Messrs. Henderson, Wardle, and MacDonald, accompanied by the Russian delegates, crossed the Channel in a warship and conferred at Paris with the French Socialist Party. A new procedure was proposed to the Organising Bureau.

A recommendation was made that the International Conference should be postponed until the 9th September, and the preliminary Inter-Allied Conference until the 28th and 29th August.

On Friday, 10th August, 1917, a special Party-Conference met at the Central Hall, Westminster, to consider the invitation. Mr. Henderson's speech determined the decision. The

burden of his message was, that ten or twelve weeks ago he was opposed to the holding of such a Conference ; now he had no hesitation in saying that having regard to the condition of public opinion in Russia at the moment, to reject the invitation would be the most fatal position he could take up " either in a Government capacity or as a representative of the great British Labour Movement."

The visit of Mr. Henderson to Paris with his colleagues had caused grave embarrassment to the War Cabinet. The decision of the Labour Party Conference was allowed to cause them even greater embarrassment, and during an interview which Mr. Henderson had with Mr. Lloyd George the same evening, they both came to the conclusion that Mr. Henderson's position as Secretary of the Labour Party was no longer compatible with his membership of the War Cabinet. He at once resigned. In a letter published in the Press the following day Mr. Lloyd George suggested that the situation in Russia "had completely changed" and that Mr. Henderson knew it. He specifically accused Mr. Henderson of withholding from the Conference telegraphic information in his possession that the Russian Government regarded the Stockholm Conference "as a party concern and its decision as no wise binding on the liberty of action of the Government." Later it was announced by the Government that the common law prohibition of intercourse with enemy subjects prevented any British delegates going to Stockholm, or in a plainer language, that if the Labour delegates went to Stockholm without passports, they would be arrested on their return.

But Mr. Henderson, if he had acted against the wishes of the Cabinet, had certainly been loyal to the ideals of International Labour and the Russian Revolution. Every delegate in the Conference knew that the Stockholm Conference was a Conference of Socialist Parties. They had themselves declared, by resolution, that its decisions would not necessarily bind the British Labour Party, much less the British Government. None imagined that in those circumstances they would be binding on other parties or other Governments. Mr. Lloyd George's use of a telegram which he had obtained by the process of putting a question which suggested the answer he wanted, was typical of his manœuvring under difficulties. The textual reading of the telegram would not have influenced the vote of a single delegate. The reading of *both* telegrams would have exposed Mr. Lloyd George as the trickster which, from

that date, he was denounced as being throughout the organised Labour Movement. His attempt to humiliate Mr. Henderson, whose public policy compelled the latter to remain silent, was regarded as an insult to the Labour Movement. Mr. Henderson's defect as a Minister was that he could not change his mind so quickly nor for as little reason as Mr. Lloyd George.

When the Party Conference met again on the 21st August, they reaffirmed the desire to go to Stockholm although by a narrow majority of 3,000, the miners block having changed sides; but delegates were not appointed. But they adopted a Memorandum on War Issues which became the foundation of international working-class diplomacy. Shortly afterwards the Russians began their offensive, and the Second Russian Revolution followed in October. Free Russian Democracy gave way to the Bolshevik dictatorship, to a separate peace with Germany, to civil war, to a war of the Allies against Russia. The Russian delegates who brought the message of the Revolution to British Labour themselves became exiled, or disappeared in the Bolshevik wilderness. The situation had indeed changed.

But if the party were not unanimous in facing the International problem, at least in the first three years, and appeared to be torn asunder by divisions, made powerless by indecisions, there was no lack of cohesion, foresight, and determination in its handling of the War in its economic and social aspects. The War Emergency Workers' National Committee, which united all the elements, political, industrial, and co-operative, in the movement, and brought together persons of diverse opinions on the War for the study of purposes of united action in civil effort, was the symbol of the fundamental unity of the party. At the very outset of the War the Committee drafted and published a general programme of civil relief. By its propaganda it effected an improvement in the scales adopted by local representative committees of the National Relief Fund, and succeeded in having various restrictions in the administration of relief removed, including payment in kind in certain districts, the fixing of a maximum amount, and the penalisation of unemployed men of enlistable age. It focussed public attention upon the diversion of the money contributed for civil relief to military and naval relief, and made suggestions for legal protection being given to the families of men joining the colours by providing means whereby restraint or

eviction for the non-payment of rent, the lapsing of insurance policies, and the voiding of hire purchase agreements. It resisted the exploitation of child labour for the purpose of increasing the nation's man-power. When coal prices rose to an exorbitant level during the winter of 1914, especially in London, the Committee demonstrated that, despite appearances, coal consumers were being fleeced by a restricted ring of coal merchants. The Government set up a Committee of inquiry, and in 1915 an Act was passed to limit the price of coal at the pit mouth. But it was not until February 1917 that all the coal mines were brought under State control and profits strictly limited.

The War Emergency Committee was among the pioneers in the movement for rent restriction. It kept before the public the case of the old age pensioner with fixed income amidst rising prices. After eighteen months of continuous agitation the Government granted additional allowances in cases of special hardship. A general and permanent increase followed later. Similarly at the beginning of the War the Committee joined with the *Daily Citizen* in popularising the demand for increased separation allowances and pensions, placing its minimum at the level of a pound a week. After twelve months of vain endeavour to secure efficient administration of naval and military pensions through five separate departments, the Committee's plan of centralised control under a Pensions Minister (Mr. George N. Barnes) was adopted. It was a condition of Mr. Barnes's acceptance of this office, that the Army Warrant should be revised. The Committee were the first to denounce Government inefficiency in its primary function of assuring the food supply and showed remarkable foresight in their suggestions for State control of food imports, home production of supplies, centralisation of Allied purchasing, fixed prices, and compulsory rationing. The Government was finally converted to these principles by the prolongation of the War, the blockade, and the "food queues." The Committee made a suggestion of a 6d. loaf, the loss to be met as a part of the cost of the War, but it was not adopted. They exposed the profiteers and their plunder, especially the shipping companies, though shipping freights were not controlled until March 1918.

All this agitational work took place through the Labour Movement by pamphlets and meetings, local conferences and National conferences, and in Parliament through the Parlia-

mentary Labour Party. There was a political truce, but no truce in the condition of the people question.

The party was studying not only the social problems of the War. Early in 1916 a Committee representing the Labour Movement in its political and industrial aspects had begun to consider Labour problems after the War, and before the end of the year it had published its suggestions for the restoration of Trade-Union standards, which had been abandoned simultaneously with the limitation of profits in controlled establishments, and the problems of the demobilisation which took place two years later.

In the autumn of 1917, after the Stockholm disillusionment, the party turned with renewed vigour towards problems of national and international reconstruction, beginning with a restatement of its faith in a new social order and a recasting of its organisation.

CHAPTER XIV

RECONSTRUCTION AND A NEW BEGINNING

Labour's War Aims—Peace Policy—Restoration of the International—Broadening the Party Constitution—Programme and Policy—The Political Truce—Break-up of the Coalition—General Election, 1918.

WHEN Mr. Lloyd George threw out of his Cabinet the leader of the Labour Party who had assisted the Government which mobilised the human material resources of the country with a minimum of class and craft antagonism, and had allayed the uneasy conscience of Labour, keeping its head and hands turned towards war and nothing but war, he liberated forces of idealism and enthusiasm which in a few years were to overwhelm and destroy him as a political leader. From the first moment of the War, Labour had fought for a peoples' peace. The exigencies of internal politics had driven the party into a false position of confidence in the Allied Governments. The Russian Revolution brought with it revelations of "War Aims" which impressed the leaders of organised democracy with their failure to effect policy. The compulsory resignation of Mr. Henderson challenged their right to control policy, and in their own way and in their own time and with their own people, whatever their nationality, to lay the foundations of a peoples' peace. They would now brook no denial to pursue their own course, to throw down their own democratic challenge to the Allied Governments, to seek agreement on "War Aims" across the trenches with workers in the Central Empires. The issue now became in the sphere of international politics a democratic or an imperialistic peace, and in the sphere of national politics, reconstruction on a Socialist or a Capitalist basis.

Mr. Henderson left the Government with the conviction that at the first opportunity Mr. Lloyd George would convert

the enthusiasm created by an allied military victory into votes for his Government at a General Election at his own chosen moment. As a Minister Mr. Henderson had a decisive though undisclosed share in the making of the Representation of People Act, which became the law in February, 1918; as a politician and as Secretary of the Labour party he initiated a movement for the revision of the Party programme and the party constitution in preparation for the ordeal of a General Election. But the War was not yet over.

British Labour's first effort to reach agreement upon "War Aims" among the Inter-Allied Socialist and Labour Parties failed at a Conference in London on 28th-29th August, 1917. There was a disproportionate representation of minority groups in the British representation; both the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party brought forward amendments; the French and Belgians put in separate statements to the party memorandum on War Issues; the Russian Delegation was an unwilling participant in a conference which was not international, and the French Delegation was divided. Belgium and French Majority Socialists and various individuals refused to go on with the Stockholm project, or abstained from voting.

The initiative in the direction of British Labour's War policy then passed to the Trades Union Congress meeting at Blackpool on 3rd-8th September, 1917, where Mr. Henderson was received with a warmth of demonstration almost without precedent in the history of those gatherings. Undeterred by the failure of the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference, a new plan and a new procedure was adopted with the organisation of a common working-class front. Mr. Robert Smillie presented a compromise resolution which had been agreed to by members of the Parliamentary Committee who did not like to compromise and who hated compromise, and who would not for their own sake compromise upon a question concerning which they held very strong views. It stated that a conference at Stockholm at the present moment "could not be successful." It might be useful, but it could not be successful unless there was a general agreement of aims among the working-classes of the Allied nations. Subject to this fundamental condition, and a condition that minorities would only vote according to the numbers actually represented, the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee were empowered to assist, arrange, and take part in such a Conference.

This policy was adopted by 2,849,000 against 91,000 votes. The massed battalions of British Labour had recovered their unity, and the Trades Union Congress had for the first time joined the International Labour Movement. On the same day the Executive Committee of the Labour Party accepted the Blackpool resolution as a basis for joint action with the Trades Union Congress, and on 28th September, 1917, a memorandum on "War Aims" by British Labour was adopted, with practical unanimity, by a national conference of the societies affiliated to the Congress and the party, and presented the same evening to Mr. Lloyd George, Prime Minister, at Downing Street. Mr. Lloyd George made excuses for the failure of the Allies to declare their "War Aims." The question was constantly being kept in view, but the absence of representatives from Russia made a consultation impossible. But, nevertheless, Mr. Lloyd George's political instinct did not fail him. Within a few days, when meeting representatives of Labour to discuss "man power," he formulated the "War Aims" of the British Government with a new explicitness and wealth of detail. And on 8th January, 1918, President Wilson, who was acquainted with the first draft of the British memorandum on "War Issues," published to the world his Fourteen Points of Peace. British Labour had won a memorable victory.

At Nottingham, on 23rd January, 1918, the Labour Party, at a National conference, welcomed these statements, and called upon the working-class organisations of the central powers to declare their "War Aims," and to influence their Governments to make similar statements in order that the world may see how far the declaration of all the Powers provided a basis for a negotiated and lasting peace. Assuming that a general agreement could be arrived at by the Labour and Socialist Parties of the allied nations, the Governments were urged to allow facilities for attendance at an International Congress in some neutral State where an effort would be made to bring into harmony the desires of the working-classes in all the countries at war.

The first condition of Inter-Allied Labour agreement was fulfilled by the adoption of the British Labour memorandum on "War Aims," amplified and strengthened by an Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference at London, on 20th-24th February, 1918. The Socialist Parties of France, Belgium, and Italy were represented, and delegates of other

organisations were present in a consultative capacity. Members of the National Executive of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress represented British Labour. Russia was not represented. The delegates of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries sent a protest from Russia against the refusal of passports by the Bolshevik Government. A long, detailed, and definite statement of "War Aims" and peace terms was adopted with a reservation by the Italian Socialist Party, that it had to be considered merely as a guide to the peace negotiations.

"Of all the conditions of peace," it was stated in the memorandum, "none is so important to the peoples of the world, as that there should be henceforth on earth no more war; whoever triumphs the peoples will have lost unless an international system is established which will prevent war." That system implied the constitution of a League of Nations and the immediate establishment of an International High Court of Justice and the development of International Legislation. This section of the memorandum was an anticipation of the Covenant of the League, and the Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes was even anticipated in detail:

By a solemn agreement that the States and peoples consulted shall pledge themselves to submit every issue between two or more of them to arbitration. Refusal to accept arbitration or to submit to the settlement will imply deliberate aggression, and all the nations will necessarily have to make common cause, by using any and every means at their disposal, either economic or military, against any State or States refusing to submit to the arbitration awards or attempting to break the world's Covenant of peace.

But the sincere acceptance of the League of Nations and its Covenants implied universal democracy, suppression of secret diplomacy, publication of all treaties, and Parliamentary control of foreign policy. The League of Nations must take steps to prohibit fresh armaments on land and sea and abolish profit-making armament firms.

The establishment of a League of Nations which would organise a consultation of peoples for purposes of self-determination would give an entirely new aspect to territorial problems. This was the second main principle of the memor-

andum. "Any adjustment of boundaries that became necessary must be based exclusively upon the desire of the people concerned." Solutions of particular problems were proposed : the restoration of Belgian independence and the payment of reparations for damages by the German Government under the direction of an International Commission, the disannexation of Alsace and Lorraine to be confirmed by a plebiscite ; the administrative reorganisation of the Balkan peoples by a special Balkan conference or by an authoritative International Commission without regard to the imperialistic pretensions of Austria-Hungary, Turkey or other State, on the basis of self-determination ; freedom of religions and political equality ; a Balkan customs and postal union and a Balkan Federation for concerted arrangement on matters of common interest ; the union of the people of Italian blood and speech within its own boundaries, and the protection of minorities in the new Italian or Slavonian States ; the reconstitution of Poland in unity and independence, with free access to the sea ; the condemnation of any annexation by Germany of Estonia, Lavonia, Courland, or Lithuania ; a Jewish Free State in Palestine under an International guarantee ; the permanent and effective neutralisation of the Dardanelles ; national independence for the Czecho-Slovaks and the Yugo-Slavs according to rules to be laid down by the League of Nations or, if they think fit, the substitution of the Danubian States for the Austro-Hungarian Empire ; and finally, the special consideration by the Peace Conference of the question of colonies taken by conquest ; for "economic equality in such territories for the people of all nations," for the "concession of administrative autonomy of groups of people that attain a certain degree of civilisation," and, for all others, "a progressive participation in local government" ; and for tropical Africa "a system of control established by agreement under the League of Nations," which would "take into account the wishes of the peoples," would safeguard the native tribes in the ownership of the soil, and "devote all revenues to the well-being and development of the colonies themselves."

The memorandum declared against economic war, in favour of the principle of the open door, and emphasised the need for International Labour Legislation, the maximum eight-hour day, the prevention of certain unhealthy trades, and the prohibition of night work by women and children.

To make the world safe for democracy involved much more than a prevention of war, either military or economic, in view of the probable world-wide shortage after the war of food-stuffs and raw materials. A plan was proposed to meet the most urgent needs of the whole world community, on the principle of "no cake for anyone until all have bread," and it suggested how demobilisation could be prevented from bringing misery and impoverishment to the working-classes.

To ensure the full and impartial restoration of the devastated areas and the setting-up of the wage-earners in homes and employment, it was suggested that assessment and distribution of the compensation should be made under the direction of an International Commission.

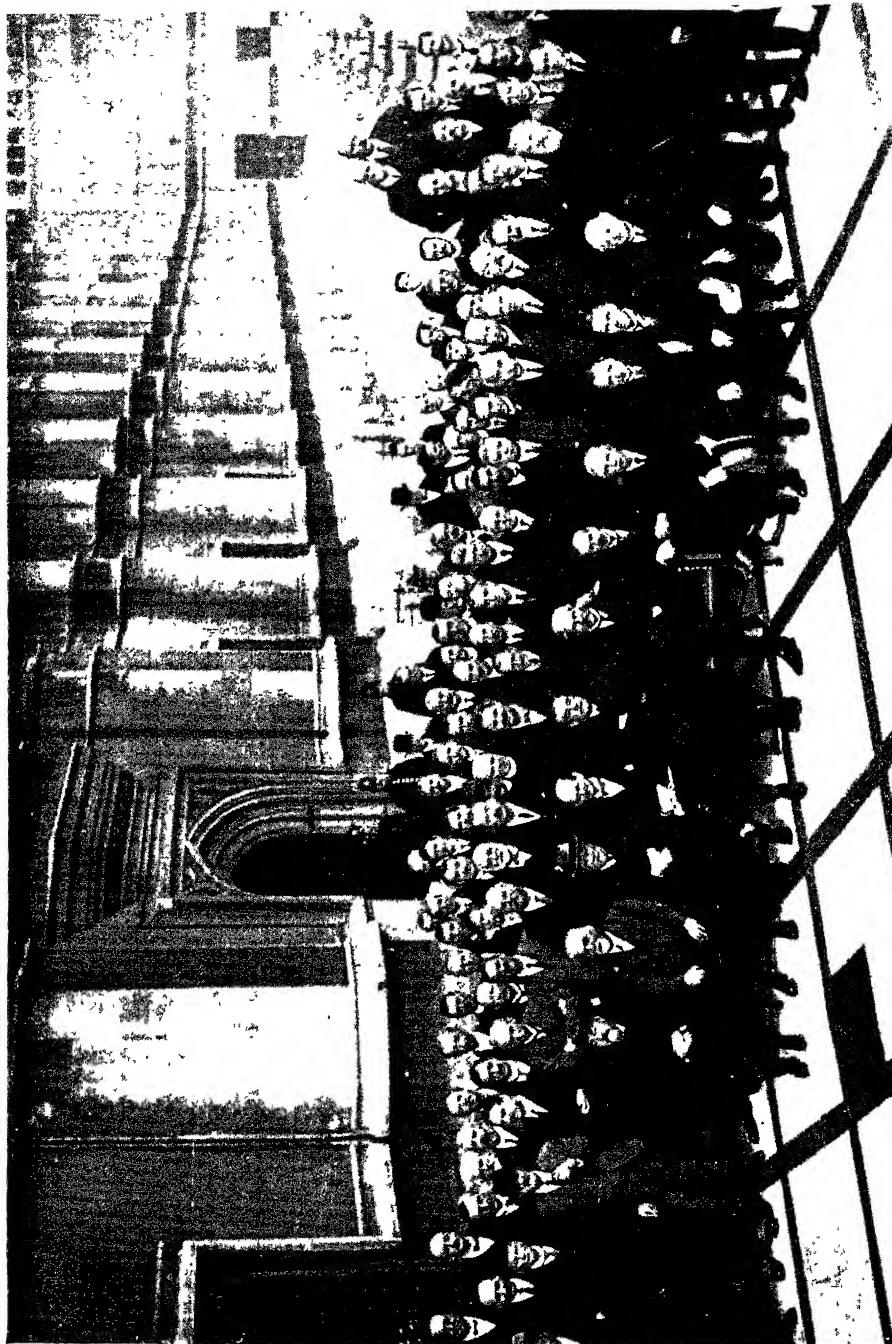
The Conference resolved to transmit these conditions of peace to the Socialists of the Central Powers and to the nations allied with them, and to ask for their answers in the hope that they would take part without delay in a joint effort with the International in a Congress organised by a Committee whose impartiality could not be questioned. However, as an essential condition of this Congress, the Conference was of opinion that the organisers of the Congress should satisfy themselves that the organisations to be represented should put in a precise form, by a public declaration, their peace terms, in conformity with the principles, "No annexation or punitive indemnities, and the right of all peoples to self-determination"; and further to show that they were working with all their power to obtain from their Government the necessary guarantees to apply these principles honestly and unreservedly to all questions to be dealt with at any official Peace Conference.

Allied Socialism, as *The Times* declared, had gone to work "in a methodical and purposeful manner." Not only had the Labour organisations a right to pursue their own diplomatic policy, but they could, in some respects, do so more effectively than statesmen or Governments. But the British Government was of another opinion. It was not until the end of May, 1918, that the text of the Allied Socialist memorandum reached the German Social Democratic Party. Mr. Troelstra, the leader of the Dutch Socialists, who was acquainted with their point of view, desired to come to London for the purpose of consultations with the British Labour Movement on the International situation in the same month. The Government refused to

give him that permission. It even prevented Miss Margaret Bondfield from going to the United States as the British fraternal delegate to the Convention of the American Federation of Labour.

Following a hint in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and after telegraphic inquiries from Mr. Troelstra, Mr. Henderson made the hopeful announcement that the German Majority Socialists were willing to enter into discussions upon the basis of the peace programme drafted by the Dutch-Scandinavian Socialists. On territorial questions, the Neutrals' proposals included the independence of Belgium, with restoration at the expense of Germany, the re-establishment of Serbia, with access to the sea, a plebiscite for Alsace-Lorraine, the independence of Armenia and of the former Russian provinces of Poland, with autonomy for Prussian and Austrian Poland, and a federal organisation of Austria and Russia. The Bulgarian, Austrian, and Hungarian Parties were willing to accept the London memorandum as a basis of discussion in an International Conference. If the German Majority Socialists were willing to accept the Neutrals' proposals, a basis of agreement had been discovered upon which an International Conference might build.

This was the opinion of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party at their meeting on 7th August, but later information compelled them to review the situation. A letter from Mr. Hermann Mueller to Mr. Camille Huysmans published in *Vorwaerts*, on 16th July, contained no reference to the acceptance of the Stockholm memorandum of the Neutral Socialists. He made the explicit declaration that his party had "no cause to depart from the declarations which were made at Stockholm." The process of disillusionment had, therefore, not yet been carried far enough among the German people. This was the view taken by the Inter-Allied Socialists meeting again in London on 17th-20th September, with representatives of the American Federation of Labour. Deep regret was expressed that the German Majority failed officially to accept even the Neutrals' proposals as a basis of discussion. So long as these points remained unanswered they created an obstacle to the holding of an International Conference. This Conference made a demand for the direct official representation of the workers in the official delegations which would formulate the Peace Treaty, and decided that a world Labour Congress should be held at the same time and place as the Peace Con-



THE LABOUR PARTY AS OFFICIAL OPPOSITION.
On the Terrace of the House of Commons, 1923.

ference. Under the guidance of Mr. Kerensky it issued the first grave warning of International Labour against the tremendous dangers of the incipient policy of intervention in Russia.

The Diplomatic Conference of International Socialism never took place. An International which was powerless to prevent the War was powerless also to stop the War. The gulf between the German and Allied Socialists was never bridged until the War had come to an end, with the victory of Allied arms. The International, with the exception of the Belgians, Swiss, and Italian sections and the Russian Communists, then reassembled at Berne. The invitation to the Berne Conference in February, 1919, convoked by a Committee of Allied Socialists—Vandervelde, Albert Thomas, and A. Henderson—was really an invitation to the working-class movement to formulate its ideas of the foundations of a peace treaty and resume international relations. Before the Conference closed, 102 delegates had attended from 26 countries.

At the very outset of the proceedings, there was a dramatic confrontation of the French and German Socialists and of the Independents and the Majority Socialists, in which Hermann Mueller certainly cleared himself of the charge that he had misrepresented the probable action of the German Socialists at the outbreak of war in voting the War Credits. He had not anticipated that the elements in the party who afterwards seceded and formed the Independents would have voted for the Credits, and that was the basis of his judgment that on the whole it was more than probable that the party would abstain from voting. The Conference left to a future International Congress the task of formulating the judgment of the International on the world-historic question of responsibility for the War. The German Revolution and the development of democratic and Socialist institutions which it involved made the way clear again for the common work of the International.

Another source of division in the Conference which revealed the line of cleavage which was later to delay the reconstruction of the International was the determination of the majority, in view of what was happening in Russia, to reaffirm the old principles of the International :

A reorganised society [they said], more and more permeated with Socialism, cannot be realised, much less permanently established unless it rests upon triumphs of democracy and is rooted

in the principles of liberty. Those institutions which constitute democracy also provide the working-classes with the means of carrying on the class struggle. True socialism implied the methodical development in the different branches of economic activity under the control of democracy. The arbitrary taking over of a few concerns by small groups of workers [what was happening in Russia at that moment] is not Socialism, it is merely capitalism with numerous shareholders.

The resolution was a sketch of the constitution and functions of the League of Nations which, among other things, would establish, develop, and enforce an International Labour Charter. In its resolution on International Labour Legislation the Conference gave to the Conference of Governments at Paris, for embodiment in the Peace Treaty, the text of clauses guaranteeing a minimum standard of life and work for the workers of all countries. Three of the British delegates, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Stuart-Bunning, and Mr. J. H. Thomas, had assisted the Labour members of the International Labour Commission of the Peace Conference, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Gompers, to draft the part of the Treaty which established the International Labour Office.

The questions brought before the Territorial Commission of the Conference were arranged in twenty-eight groups. Agreement was reached by the nationalities concerned under fifteen of these heads. Finally, the Majority Parties of more than twenty countries empowered the Committee to take steps for the early reorganisation of the International.

The Berne Conference had many memorable moments : the appearance of Dr. Friedrich Adler, the assassin of Count Sturgh, now the idol of the Austrian Republican working-class ; evidence of the new spirit of Germany in the persons of Kurt Eisner and Haase, who were later to become the victims of German reaction ; the dramatic appearance of Ernest Toller, who brought the message of German youth to the Conference, which was later to be carried across the world in prose and poetry from a Bavarian prison.

The resurrection of the old spirit of idealism and political independence was given an even more concrete significance in national politics. On the 23rd January, 1918, at the Nottingham Conference of the party, Mr. Henderson made a passing reference to the "close proximity of a General Election." A General Election implied preparation for party warfare. The Labour Party had already been rescued from the doldrums

of the Coalition. Though it continued to be associated with the national Government, and the national purpose in the War, it was preparing to open its gates to the many millions of new voters, including 8,000,000 newly enfranchised women, and to make the homeland worthy of the sacrifices of the soldiers and sailors. It became in fact a new party on a wider basis with a more comprehensive definition of its aims and objects, ready to command a new majority of the electorate.

The Nottingham Conference of the Labour Party is the true turning-point in British political history which led to the first Labour Government. The participation of Labour in international affairs and its attempt to institute a genuine working-class diplomacy had brought national and international prestige to the party. The increase of national productivity during the War, by national reorganisation on Socialistic lines, prepared more thoughtful members of the community for bold experiments in the period of reconstruction. The younger generation, who only knew of politics, that through the failure of politicians they had been sent to war in the early prime of manhood, might have to choose their political allegiance even on the battle-fields. As then organised, they could not enter the Labour Party except through narrow gates. The local organisation of the party could not utilise their individual effort and sustained enthusiasm, because the Labour Party was not a national political party, having branches open to individual members in every Parliamentary constituency; it was a federation, nationally and locally, of Trade Unions, Socialist Societies, and Co-operative Societies. One became a member of the party by joining one of the affiliated societies, and in hundreds of constituencies there was no Labour Party and no Labour candidate. The Labour Party could not welcome votes of the new voters, especially women, and not welcome their membership. Nor could they insist, with any prospect of political success, that new members of the party must first pass through the narrow gates of the Fabian Society or the Independent Labour Party.

The new constitution adopted at a special Conference on the 21st February, 1918, brought into the ranks of the party those large sections of the public who for various reasons had neither the necessity nor the opportunity of joining Trade Unions, on the one hand, and on the other who were not prepared to associate with the Socialist organisations already affiliated with

the party. Individual members, both men and women, were welcomed into the Local Labour Party called into existence in each Parliamentary constituency. The women's Labour League became merged with the party. The local Labour Party became a working alliance of individual members, and members of the affiliated Trade Unions and Socialist branches in the constituency, and the women members had the right to create women's sections for their special work among the women electorate. The National Conference was to consist of delegates from the national Trade Unions and Socialist societies and the Local Labour Parties. The National Executive was to consist of twenty-two members chosen by the National Conference, thirteen from the Trade Unions and Socialist Societies, five from the Local Labour Parties, and four women members.

The objects of the party, which had been defined "as to organise and maintain in Parliament and the country a political Labour Party," were given a more comprehensive definition. Labour became "the producers by hand or by brain," for whom the party aimed to secure the "full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof, that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

This constitution marked the rebirth of the Labour Party. The intellectual and the manual workers were invited to join hands on a Socialist platform. They were asked to help in establishing a New Social Order skilfully and attractively portrayed in the party's programme of After-War Reconstruction, issued under the title "Labour and the New Social Order," and adopted at the London Conference of the party on the 26th June, 1918, by a series of resolutions on reconstruction. It was a deliberately thought out, systematic, and comprehensive plan for the immediate social rebuilding which any Government must ultimately be driven to undertake. "The four pillars of the House that the party propose to erect, resting upon the common foundation of the democratic control of society in all its activities, may be termed respectively ; (a) The Universal Enforcement of the National Minimum ; (b) The Democratic Control of an Industry ; (c) The Revolution in National Finance ; (d) The Surplus Wealth for the Common Good."

The various detailed proposals of the Labour Party resting on these four pillars were briefly summarised. It was a complete programme for the legislative regulation of employment, the organisation of demobilisation, and social insurance against unemployment. The first condition of democracy is effective personal freedom. Individual freedom was of little use without complete political rights, but unlike the Conservative and Liberal Parties, the Labour Party insisted on democracy in industry as well as in government. It was a programme for the immediate nationalisation of railways and mines, and the production of electrical power, and the extension of municipal enterprise to the retailing of coal and the organisation of the local supply of milk. It proposed a revolution in National Finance—a reformed income-tax and super-tax rising from a penny in the pound on the smallest assessable income up to sixteen or even nineteen shillings in the pound on the highest income of the millionaires, the direct taxation of land values, regraduated death duties, and a capital levy to free the nation from the new load of interest-bearing debt for loans which ought to have been levied as taxation. It was a repudiation of imperialism and a programme for the progressive development of the British Commonwealth on the lines of local autonomy and Home Rule all round. It was a programme of foreign policy based on the leading ideas of the memorandum on "War Aims." It was a programme which enriched Social propagandists throughout the world and stirred the imagination and fears of the governing classes in Great Britain and the United States.

With a new programme and a new constitution and a rank and file spoiling for a fight, the next step towards normal party warfare was the denunciation of the political truce as regards by-elections by the Nottingham Conference. Mr. Ben Tillett had broken the truce and fought and won Salford on a complete pro-war platform, and Keighley and Wansbeck local parties had fought by-elections in defiance of the National Executive's recommendation. The party now decided to break the truce which they could not keep. The proposal was resisted by Mr. Barnes. Mr. Clynes, who had become Food Controller, "did not very much care whether it was carried or not," but he attacked its most ardent supporters because of their underlying purpose to wreck the Government. But that was certainly not the intention of the

Conference, as nearly a million votes were cast against the resolution.

The Executive Committee which proposed the breaking of the truce had no thought of exploiting the national situation for party purposes. In the spring of 1918, when the German army was driving towards Amiens, and all England was holding its breath, they abandoned propaganda meetings which had been arranged in the great cities. They were only making a tentative method to adjust political practice to the existing political situation. In the autumn of 1918 all the writers in the Press whose inspiration came from well-informed sources predicted a General Election in November; and as Mr. Henderson had predicted, it was Mr. Lloyd George himself who revived party warfare and finally determined upon a General Election, on the very day that the Armistice was signed. A special Labour Party Conference held in London on the 14th November, 1918, did not hesitate to declare that a General Election held for the purpose of choosing a Parliament to carry on the business of the country after the War terminated the conditions under which the party entered the Coalition. It determined that the party would resume its independence and withdraw its members from the Government at the close of the Parliament. Mr. G. N. Barnes and Mr. Clynes held that the national Government should continue until the Peace Treaty had been signed. They argued that it was inconsistent to withdraw from the Coalition and at the same time to demand as the Conference had done that "the workers should have direct official representation" at the Peace Delegation. The Conference was unmoved. They believed that the object of the election was to defeat the Labour Party and drive from public life those who challenged the authority of Mr. Lloyd George. Under his leadership the Coalition "won a great victory," and went to Versailles to make a Peace Treaty with the motto, "vengeance is mine." The Peace of International Co-operation which Labour urged in its call to the people had to be slowly rebuilt on the ruins of Versailles. Nevertheless, the more far-sighted politicians were not deceived. In Great Britain 9,775,174 votes were polled. The total votes polled for Labour candidates were 2,244,945. Only 57 Labour candidates were returned, although the party polled one-third of the votes. In the General Election, January, 1910, 78 Labour candidates contested seats; in December, 1918, 361 Labour candidates went to the polls. Less than 59 per cent. of the

electors recorded their votes. About one and a half million soldiers on the battle-front did not vote at all. In any event they had been denied the opportunity of studying the issues. It was the soldiers and sailors who made the greatest sacrifices in the War ; it was the civilians who made the peace. In December, 1918, the foundations of a new national party had been well and truly laid. The soldiers and sailors when they came home, and the younger generation, began to build upon that foundation a New Social Order.

CHAPTER XV

LABOUR IN OPPOSITION

The 1918 Election—Party Divisions—Forces for Unity—Gains and Losses—Work in Parliament—Changes in Leadership—Important Issues of Policy—By-elections—Changes in Party Organisation—The Women Voters.

THE General Election of 1918 found the Labour Party badly prepared for the fight. It is perfectly true that under the capable hand of the National Agent, Mr. Egerton P. Wake, the whole machinery of organisation had been strengthened and improved, but the spirit of unity which had gone to the building of the party had been ruthlessly shattered as a result of the intense bitterness created during the four years of war. Labour more than any of the other political parties had depended for its electoral successes on the unity and idealism of the rank and file. In consequence it suffered proportionately when that unity was destroyed. Ostensibly one party fighting under the one Labour banner went to the polls in December in 1918; in reality there were two different parties more deeply divided from each other than the majority were from the party of Mr. Lloyd George. One month from the declaration of the Armistice was all too short to heal the wounds which had bitten into the very soul of the party. Mr. Lloyd George had chosen his time to throw down the gage, and instead of being called upon to fight a united and organised Labour Movement, he was faced by two groups many of whose members were more hostile to one another than they were, at that time, to him.

The election results themselves are the best indication of the confusion in the ranks of the party. Looking back now from the comparative unity of to-day to the war years, the first thought is not that there should have been disunity: the amazing wonder is that even the present semblance of unity should have been evolved from the tangled mass of personal jealousies

and sectional hatreds which had grown up during those four terrible years. It is quite probable that the outsider only knew of the superficial differences, but the active worker in the movement knew the depth of the antagonism which had been capable of turning life-long friends into active enemies. The records of the Party Conferences and the annual meetings of the Trades Union Congress bear ample testimony to the bitter feud which persisted inside the ranks of the movement. Each Conference seemed to lose sight of its historic mission and almost without exception allowed itself to develop into a family quarrel between those who supported the War and those who opposed it. New recruits to the movement will find it hard to believe that a message to Congress from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald could be publicly destroyed. Nevertheless it actually happened when Mr. David Gilmour of the Lanarkshire Miners, to the accompaniment of loud cheers, publicly tore to shreds a manifesto from the Union of Democratic Control of which Mr. MacDonald was chairman. So bitter did the feeling become that in one Trades Congress a motion was placed on the agenda which virtually had for its object the expulsion of Mr. MacDonald and his band of non-Trade-Union colleagues.

Fortunately a sufficient number of delegates retained their balance, and the motion was defeated. These incidents help to illustrate the temper of the leaders of the movement. Knowing what the tempers were at that time, one is not surprised that confusion should have existed at the 1918 election. One can only marvel that the party could have been so miraculously united in such a short space of time.

One or two things are directly responsible for this. The first is that a few of the more responsible leaders maintained a fairly sane attitude during the years of difference. Men like Mr. MacDonald on the one side and Mr. Henderson on the other, whilst they differed fundamentally on the issues arising from the War, conducted their differences without heat and without bitterness. Mr. MacDonald had resigned the leadership of the party, but still retained the treasurership. In consequence he was constantly in touch with Mr. Henderson (who was still Secretary) in connection with the administrative side of the party's work. It should also be mentioned that on the occasion when the expulsion of the intellectuals was moved, the speech which probably more than any other secured the defeat of the motion was that of Mr. J. H. Thomas,

who all through had been a supporter of the War. As a result of their moderation, when the time came to close the ranks, there were fewer personal wounds to heal amongst those who were generally accepted as the National leaders. Had these leaders parted, it is quite possible that a united front would not have been attained for many long years. As it was, the fight to secure the party's withdrawal from the Coalition was bitter and protracted, and right up till the eve of the General Election some leaders were contending that the time had not come to oppose Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition Government. A special Party Conference held at London in 1918 finally decided by a very large majority that those who wished to remain members of the Coalition would be obliged to sever their connection with the Labour Party. With the exception of some three or four, every Labour Member accepted the decision and went to the polls as Labour Candidates owning allegiance to no party but their own. In spite of the semblance of unity there existed very little. The differences amongst the leaders had spread to the rank and file. Supporters of the War refused to work and vote for pacifist candidates, whilst pacifists refused to work for those who were supposed to have deserted the principles of the party by their support of the War.

The other great factor in promoting unity was the action of the Coalition Government in their various attempts to smash the Soviet Republic of Russia. Nothing is ever quite so useful in the settling of a family quarrel as the intervention of an outsider. It invariably happens that both sides to the family dispute forget their quarrel and unite to rend the outsider, and probably no one did so much to bring the Labour forces together as Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill. The Labour Party leaders believed rightly or wrongly that preparations were being made by the Coalition Government for an attack on the Workers' Government in Russia. Rumours were rife with tales of naval preparations. It was known that concentrations were taking place in the Baltic and men on leave had been recalled. On Wednesday, 4th August, 1920, telegrams were issued by Mr. Arthur Henderson to all the local Labour Parties and Trades Councils affiliated to the Labour Party urging that Citizen Demonstrations should be held on Sunday, 8th August, protesting against war with Russia. On 5th August a joint meeting was held of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, the

Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and the Parliamentary Labour Party. At that meeting the famous Council of Action was formed. Five representatives were appointed from each of the three bodies, and the names are worth keeping on record : Messrs. Harry Gosling, A. A. Purcell, A. B. Swales, R. B. Walker, and Miss Margaret Bondfield were chosen to represent the Trades Union Congress, Messrs. A. G. Cameron, Frank Hodges, C. T. Cramp, Robert Williams, and J. Bromley from the National Executive of the Labour Party, and from the Parliamentary Labour Party Messrs. William Adamson, J. R. Clynes, J. O'Grady, John Robertson, and Colonel Josiah Wedgwood.

The newly formed Council immediately decided to convene a special Conference to which Trade Unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party should be invited. This Conference was held in the Central Hall, Westminster, under the chairmanship of Mr. William Adamson. It is no exaggeration to say that this was probably the most harmonious Conference ever held in the history of the party. Here was an issue on which all the warring sections were absolutely united and determined, and men who had openly and violently quarrelled during the war years were now publicly appealing to the movement to let the dead past bury its dead. It may be a debatable point as to whether the Council of Action prevented war with Russia, but there is no doubt at all that it played a large part in uniting the whole Labour Movement.

Whilst the spirit of the movement was being unified through the fight to save the Workers' Republic, another movement of great importance had taken place in the tactical methods of fighting organised reaction. This movement was born out of the futility of fighting on sectional lines. It had long been a matter of discussion and pious wish, but following the big national railway strike of 1919, a definite working policy was arrived at. These changes have been more fully explained in the previous chapter. Here it is sufficient to say that as a result of them closer relations were established between the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party which infused a new spirit of unity and determination throughout the politically and industrially organised movement. More frequent, systematic, and regular consultations were arranged for between the political and industrial leaders, and a clearer line of demarcation drawn between the functions of the

Congress and the party in the furtherance of the common aim.

THE 1918 ELECTION

In November of 1918 it almost seemed as if the party would not accept the Election challenge of Mr. Lloyd George, and the belief was prevalent that Labour would only fight those seats which it held at the time. But the changes in organisation described in the previous chapter worked a revolution. A great eleventh-hour effort was made, and when the candidates went to the poll it was found that no fewer than 361 seats were contested by candidates fighting under the Labour Party banner. Whoever was responsible for the decision to fight on this widely extended front undoubtedly saved and established the party for all time. In 1910 with no division, and no national differences the party had put forward 56 candidates and secured 370,802 votes. In 1918 with dissensions apparently splitting the party from top to bottom 361 candidates got to the polls and secured 2,244,945 votes. The results of the election, whilst showing an increase in the number of members returned, was disappointing in other ways. Men who were considered the cleverest Parliamentarians were defeated; MacDonald, Snowden, and Jowett were beaten by large majorities, and Henderson, who had given up a safe seat at Barnard Castle, was also defeated. The party returned to Westminster stronger in numbers but very much weaker in debating power and Parliamentary skill.

Even the most charitable friends of the party would scarcely claim that the work of the group in the House was an inspiration to the movement in the country. This was not altogether due to the fact that three or four prominent leaders were outside the House. Mr. Clynes, a clever debater, was returned and Mr. J. H. Thomas could always catch the ear of the House. It is generally agreed now that the first choice of a Parliamentary leader was not a wise one. Fifty-nine members had been returned, a large proportion of whom were miners, and this may account for the fact that Mr. William Adamson, the Member for West Fife, was chosen as Parliamentary leader. The belief is held in many quarters, however, that the choice of Mr. Adamson was a compromise between the followers of Mr. Clynes and Mr. J. H. Thomas. Mr. Clynes was chosen Vice-chairman in the first session and Mr. Tyson Wilson was appointed Chief Whip with Mr. Fred

Hall, Mr. Albert Smith, Mr. Tom Griffiths, and Mr. Neil McLean as Junior Whips.

If the work of the session was not an inspiration to the movement in the country, two factors were chiefly responsible. First the Coalition Government was returned in such overwhelming numbers that no Opposition, no matter how vigilant and effective, had the faintest chance of defeating the Government on any first-class issue. The "coupon" Election of 1918 was probably the first of its kind in British politics; candidates were chosen irrespective of old party doctrines, and endorsement was given only to those candidates who pledged themselves in advance to support Mr. Lloyd George. Consequently each member of the Coalition came to Parliament more pledge-bound than the supporters of the old parties had ever been, and it is probable that the Labour group were affected by the hopelessness of making an appeal in such an assembly. The second reason for the ineffectiveness (and the most important) was the fact that on most of the leading questions of the day there was no essential difference between the party leaders and that of the Coalition.

It was inevitable that the first Parliamentary session after the War should be devoted to questions arising out of the War and the terms of peace. It so happened that with few exceptions all those who had opposed the Government's war policy were defeated at the polls. Those who were returned had secured their seats because of the fact that they had been in sympathy with the policy of the Government, and found themselves committed to supporting it in its terms of peace. The party, of course, brought forward its own resolutions in the shape of private members' Bills, and in the first session moved the usual amendment to the King's speech on the question of Unemployment, but in the main their policy was the policy of the Government. On the question of Reparations and making Germany pay some of the Labour members had gone farther in Hun hating than the Coalition.

WORK OF THE SESSION, 1919

The Parliament elected in December 1918 commenced business on 11th February, 1919, and proceeded to discuss the King's speech. The party moved the following amendment to the address: "But regrets the absence of any mention of definite proposals for dealing with the present causes of in-

dustrial unrest and for securing, as regards wages and working hours, conditions of labour that will establish a higher standard of life and social well being for the people."

This amendment was pressed to a division and received 59 votes as against 311. The Parliamentary Report of 1919 submitted to the Conference at Southport states that the policy of the Government with regard to the national factories had been criticised on several occasions, "but the Government have shown their determination to allow them to pass into private hands." This is the more interesting in view of the fact that the Labour Government also allowed valuable Government property at Gretna to be sold to private traders at only a particle of its original cost. The party also took part in debates on amendments to the address urging more generous treatment to soldiers and sailors disabled by war service, and on Agricultural Wages Boards. Much criticism has been levelled against Mr. Noel Buxton, the Minister of Agriculture in the first Labour Government, on the ground that no figure was included as a minimum in his Bill to re-establish Wages Boards for Agriculture. It would appear, however, that Mr. Buxton was following the line of party policy in leaving the minimum for each district to be settled by the respective District Committees. The amendment which the party supported in 1919 makes no mention of a minimum figure, as the wording of the amendment clearly shows. It read as follows : "The Wages Board shall so far as practicable secure for able-bodied men wages which, in the opinion of the Board, are adequate to promote efficiency and to enable a man in an ordinary case to maintain himself and his family in accordance with such standard of comfort as may be reasonable in the nature of his occupation." The first Bill brought forward by the Government was the Re-election of Ministers Bill, repealing the law which imposes on any Member taking an office of profit under the Crown the obligation to appeal to his constituency for re-election. The Government accepted a Labour amendment, providing that only those who are promoted to office in the first part of a new Parliament shall be exempt from a by-election. The party also opposed the Bill to set up a Commission to inquire into the Coal Industry, and a Bill to establish the Ministry of Health.

Opposition was given to the Naval Military and Air Force Service Bill, on the ground that conscription was being maintained in defiance of Government pledges. On the Budget

the party opposed the Imperial Preference duties and the reduction on the Excess Profits Duty, and moved amendments to repeal the tea and sugar duties. It also moved to exempt from income-tax all incomes below £250. Attention was drawn to the huge sum which has gone into private pockets during the war as a result of profiteering, and the party advocated the necessity for the State recovering as much of this money as possible in order to secure a reduction in the National Debt and strongly advocated a levy on capital.

Other Government Bills introduced in 1919 included the Housing and Town Planning Bill, Ministry of Ways and Communications Bill. The party did not offer much opposition to these Bills, but were strongly against the Government's decision to abolish the Ministry of Food.

At the beginning of the Session a motion was passed at the instance of the Government taking all the time of the House. This lapsed later on and private members were able to ballot for Bills and motions. The party was fairly fortunate and secured four Fridays for the second reading of its own Bills. The Prevention of Unemployment Bill was put down for second reading on 21st March. The Bill sought to establish the Right to Work or Maintenance, but was defeated on the second reading by 108 votes to 56. A Bill was also introduced to grant the franchise to Women on the same terms as men. The three other Bills introduced by the party were the Check-weighing in Various Industries Bill, the Local Authorities (Enabling) Bill, and the Compensation for Subsidence Bill. The party also moved motions advocating Pensions for Mothers, increased pensions and allowances for ex-service men and their dependents, and another asking that rail fares be restored to pre-war prices. The first motion was talked out, the second secured a promise from the Government to appoint a Select Committee, whilst the third was defeated by 118 votes to 53.

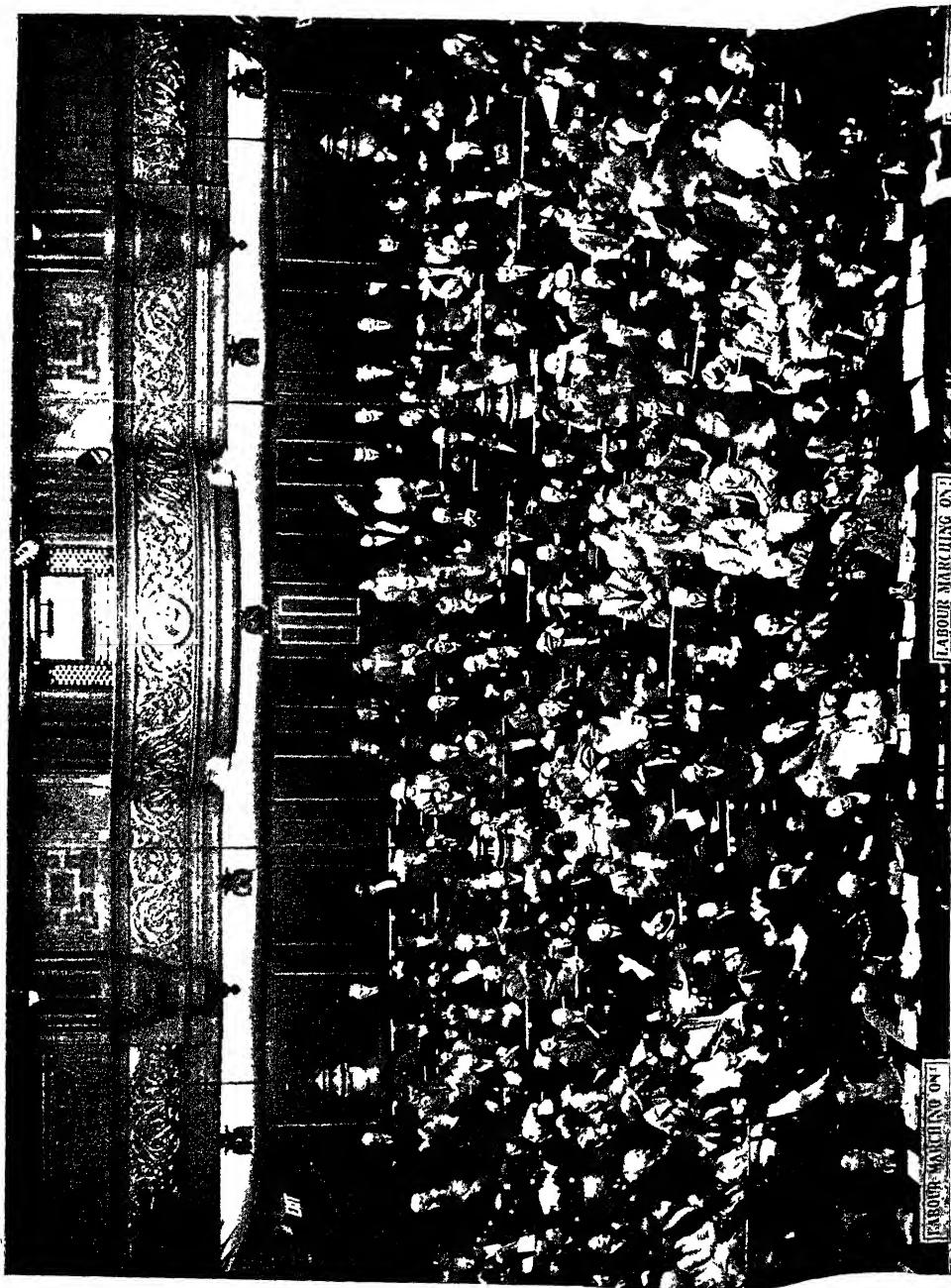
The official party amendment to the address in the 1920 Session regretted the absence of any proposal to nationalise the coal-mines of the country on the lines recommended by a majority of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, which was appointed for the purpose of advising the Government on the best method of reorganising the industry in order to secure economy in management, greater safety in working, and maximum output. The amendment was defeated by 254 votes to 60. During this time Ireland was in a state of

ferment, and as a result the party sent a deputation to investigate the conditions there and to suggest remedies. A report of investigations was published and received a wide circulation. In the House the party opposed the Government of Ireland Bill on the grounds that it would divide the Irish nation in a manner repugnant to the great majority of the Irish people, would foster and accentuate religious animosities between sections of the Irish people, and would not lead to a settlement of the Irish problem. The party moved the rejection of the Bill, but only secured 94 votes in support. Subsequently the party decided that when Clause I of the Bill (which set up two separate Parliaments) was passed in Committee it would take no further part in the proceedings.

In addition to their efforts to improve the various Government measures such as the Unemployment Insurance Bill, and the National Health Insurance Bill, the party were successful in securing several days for the introduction of private members' Bills. The measures which were introduced by the party in this session were the Women's Pensions Bill, the local Authorities (Enabling) Bill, Blind (Education, Employment, and Maintenance) Bill, Representation of the People Bill, and Compensation for Subsidence Bill. None of these Bills were passed, but as a result of the Blind Persons Bill receiving a second reading the Government introduced a separate Blind Persons Bill which provided for the old age pension being granted to blind persons at the age of 50 and empowered local authorities to promote schemes of welfare for the blind. The Bill was passed in the first Session of 1920.

During this session a great deal of criticism had been levelled against the members of the party on the ground of irregular attendance at the House, and the Annual Report covering this period in a statement emphasises the fact that compared with other parties the Labour Party had been unjustifiably attacked. Mr. Adamson, the Leader of the party, was unable to attend for a large part of the session on account of illness, and Mr. Clynes acted as Deputy Leader. At the beginning of the session 1920-21 Mr. Clynes was elected Chairman, Mr. J. H. Thomas and Mr. Stephen Walsh were elected Vice-chairmen, Mr. Arthur Henderson, who had been returned at a by-election at Widnes, was appointed Chief Whip, with Messrs. Tom Shaw, Fred Hall, Tom Griffiths, and Mr. Neil McLean as Junior Whips.

The most important amendments in the name of the party



LABOUR MARCHING ON!

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT WINDS UP: THE PLATFORM AT THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 1921,
WITH THE PREMIER, THE RT. HON. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, IN THE CHAIR.

during this session were on the questions of finance. In addition to opposing the Tea Duty and seeking to ease the burden of the income-tax on people with small incomes, the party opposed the proposal to include Co-operative Societies within the scope of the Corporation Profits Tax, but without success ; the party also opposed the repeal of the Land Values Duties. In the previous session the Government appointed a Committee to inquire into the question of war wealth, and the possibility of imposing taxation upon fortunes created as a result of the War. The Committee recommended a tax on war wealth, but ultimately the Government announced their decision not to act upon the recommendation. On 8th June, 1920, the party therefore moved the following resolution : " That this House, realising the serious effects upon trade and industry of the nation of the enormous financial burdens resulting from the War, regrets the decision of his Majesty's Government not to impose special taxation upon fortunes made as a result of the national emergency, and declares that in order to meet the present financial burdens and assist in liquidating the National Debt, further measures should be adopted for raising revenue from accumulated wealth." In the division, 81 supported the party's motion and 244 voted against. There was considerable disappointment amongst many party members at the attitude of the Parliamentary group on the question of reparations from Germany. In the Parliamentary Report submitted to the Brighton Conference of 1921, their position is made quite clear and their action in Parliament was merely a fulfilment of pledges given during the election when the general attitude was to " search Germany's pockets." The Government had introduced their German Reparation (Recovery) Bill, this Bill empowering the Government to secure payment from Germany by the imposition of a tax of 50 per cent. on the value of all goods imported from that country. It was felt that " the party could not support the Government's method of securing reparation to the amount fixed by the Allies, but to oppose the Bill on second reading without any efforts to amend it would not be in harmony with the election pledges of the members." On the third reading the following amendment was moved on behalf of the party : " Whilst desirous of securing just reparations from Germany, this House cannot accept legislation of a character which does not represent a common policy on the part of the Allies, which would only result in injury to British trade and an increase in

the volume of unemployment, and which has been introduced before sufficient effort has been made to secure a settlement by agreement, or through the League of Nations or other impartial tribunal to ascertain the extent of Germany's capacity to pay." The party opposed the Government's Bill to decontrol mines on 31st March of that year, but without success. The decontrol was followed by a national strike of miners. The party was again fortunate this session in securing Fridays for private Bills, and also secured leave to move a motion to remove the means limit on old age pensions. An amendment was moved from the Government benches which agreed with the motion but regretted the time was inopportune. The amendment was carried, but only by twelve votes. Bills were introduced by the party dealing with Rent Restrictions and a Bill to nationalise the railways, Prevention of Unemployment, Representation of the People Bill, and Mothers' Pensions. During this year Mr. Will Crooks was obliged to resign on account of ill-health, and died within a few months.

The Parliamentary Report submitted to the Annual Conference at Edinburgh in 1922 reflected the grave economic situation that had arisen after the short-lived trade boom which culminated at the end of 1920. Unemployment was rife and a great amount of legislation dealing with industrial affairs was discussed in the House. The usual party amendment to the address regretting that there was no mention of legislation to deal with unemployment was moved by Mr. Clynes, and on 23rd February Mr. Clynes introduced the party's Prevention of Unemployment Bill. An important Bill was also introduced by the Government dealing with Unemployment Insurance, and having for its object an increase in contributions and the benefits. A heroic amendment was moved by the party asking that the amount of benefit be fixed as follows :

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| For the head of a family | 40s. per week. |
| For other than the head of a family . | 25s. ,, |
| For each dependent | 5s. ,, |

The Government would not accept this, and in order to save another amendment to increase the benefit to £1 per week for men and 16s. per week for women the party's amendment was withdrawn and the other moved and accepted. The party moved nearly a score of amendments on this Bill, all of which were defeated. Several amendments were moved on the

Finance Bill, the most important being a proposal to grade the income-tax in order to prevent the proposed increase from 3s. to 6s. in the pound. Other Bills dealt with included the Safeguarding of Industries Bill, Coal Mines Decontrol Bill, Railways Bill, Public Health Bill, House Rents and Business Premises, Corn Production Acts (Repeal) Bill, War Pensions Bill, a Housing Bill.

Numerous debates took place on Housing, and another matter of importance discussed was the Washington International Labour Conventions. Mr. George Barnes, who had been the Government's representative at Washington, and agreed to the terms of the Conventions, was still a supporter of the Coalition, but the conduct of the Government over this matter compelled Mr. Barnes to take independent action, and in May of 1921 he introduced a motion "That in the opinion of this House, the Conventions adopted by the International Labour Conference under the League of Nations should be submitted to Parliament as the competent authority." To this Dr. J. T. MacNamara, Coalition Minister of Labour, moved the following amendment: "That it is not expedient in existing circumstances to proceed with legislation to give effect to the Washington Convention on Hours of Labour." Rifts were now appearing in the Coalition, and in the latter part of Session 1922 it was becoming apparent that the unnatural alliance was crumbling. In the annual Report of the Labour Party in that year the feeling that the country was tired of the Coalition is plainly evident, as the statement issued by Mr. Clynes and Mr. Henderson clearly shows. Their words are worth repeating now. The Government, they say, have now practically completed all the social legislation and all the promises of reconstruction made during the War and afterwards, and to all appearances have settled down to a policy of doing nothing which will injure the interests or offend the susceptibilities of their friends and supporters. "The sooner the record of this Government is submitted to the electors and the sooner this Parliament is purged, the better for the welfare of the nation."

The purging took place in December 1922. Sir George Younger, the "cabin boy" of the Coalition, took charge of the ship, the Tory section of the crew refused to serve under Mr. Lloyd George, and in the Election which followed those members who clung to the Coalition were almost entirely wiped out.

BY-ELECTIONS

An indication of the feeling of the country had been shown in the various by-elections which had taken place. From the date of the General Election of 1918 until that of 1922, as a result of the new machinery of organisation and the rebirth of unity, Labour made great progress at the by-elections.

Up till June 1919 only two by-elections had taken place, in both of which Labour was defeated. It will be seen, however, that they were breaking new ground, and for the first time a candidate was run in Central Aberdeenshire where Mr. Joseph Duncan received 3,482 votes against 4,950 secured by the successful candidate. In the following year no fewer than twenty-eight by-elections took place, a total of thirty from the date of the General Election. Labour contested twenty-four of these vacancies. The only "Labour seat challenged was Chester-le-Street, where Mr. Jack Lawson, the nominee of the Miners, was opposed by Mr. David Gilmour, late of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union, and the nominee of the National Democratic Party. It is rather remarkable that Mr. Gilmour, who was one of the idols of the Trades Union Congress in the early years of the War, was defeated in a straight fight by no fewer than 12,528 votes. In addition Labour gained four other seats at Bothwell, Widnes (where Mr. Arthur Henderson was elected), Spen Valley, and Dartford. In the same year Mr. Asquith was returned for Paisley. The report for the next twelve months shows an additional 34 by-elections, but only 16 were contested by Labour. Five seats were won, but Woolwich was lost by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald after one of the most stirring fights in modern political history. In this election Mr. Horatio Bottomley played a leading part against Mr. MacDonald.

In the following year Labour took part in ten by-elections. Two Labour seats were retained and four seats were won. From the date of the 1922 Conference until the General Election of 1922 an additional five by-elections were contested by Labour, one seat being retained, and another being won, at Pontypridd, by Mr. Mardy Jones. Altogether Labour had won twelve seats, making a total strength of 75 members. This number included four who had been returned under other auspices in 1918 but had since accepted the constitution of the party. Various factors were responsible for the by-election success, but probably nothing was more responsible

than the efficient organisation of the party. Mr. Egerton P. Wake had been appointed National Organiser and at once threw himself heart and soul into the work. Few people are aware of the tremendous work of organisation that has been done. In a party which is the last word in Democratic government and control, where everything is subjected to the scrutiny and criticism of Committees both national and local, Mr. Wake's task was no easy one. He advised, he cajoled, and on occasion he bullied, but invariably he got his way, and in a few short years he had built up a scheme of organisation which is at once the envy and the admiration of the other parties. The first big step forward was made with the passing of the Representation of the People Act, 1918. The Labour Party was the first to recognise the importance of capturing the women's vote, and a separate section was created for the specific purpose of organising and educating the women voters on Labour Party lines. A national organiser was appointed in the person of Dr. Marion Phillips, with powers to develop the women's movement on lines similar to that of the men. Mr. Wake's next aim was to secure a candidate for every seat which offered the basis of a good fight. With the widening of the constitution which allowed individual members to join who had no connection with a Trade Union, a fairly large number of men and women had joined who were so fortunately circumstanced as to pay their own election expenses. An attempt was also made to place a full-time Parliamentary Agent in every Division charged with the work of organising Committees for election purposes.

A new scheme of organisation was drawn up in 1919. For the purposes of organisation the country was divided into nine districts, as follows.

District A : North-Eastern.—Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire.

District B : North-Western.—Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Cheshire, High Peak Division of Derbyshire.

District C : Midlands.—Worcestershire, Derbyshire, Notts, Warwick, Leicester, Northampton, Hereford, Gloucester (except Bristol, Staffs and Shropshire).

District D : Southern and Home Counties.—Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hants, Beds, Herts, Berks, Bucks, Oxford.

District E : London—the Administrative County.
District F : South-Western.—Dorset, Wilts, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, and Bristol.
District G : Eastern.—Lincoln and Rutland, Norfolk, Suffolk, Hants, Cambridge, Essex.
District H : Wales and Monmouth.
District I : Scotland.

The next step taken was the appointment of a competent organiser to take charge of each area, whose business it was to assist and advise in the Divisions where a full-time agent was already engaged, and to form new Divisional and Local Labour Parties in the more backward constituencies. Later a woman organiser was appointed to each of the party districts, with the special purpose of interesting women voters in Labour politics and forming what are known as Women's Sections of the Labour Party. The importance of this step cannot be over-estimated, and probably nothing contributed so much to the party's success as this quickness to recognise the change in the face of British politics. This undoubtedly has been one of the most successful developments in the party's work. The women were probably more enthusiastic than the men, and at the Annual Conference of 1925 Dr. Phillips was able to report that apart from Women's Ward Committees over 1,200 Women's Sections of the party had been formed, with a membership of over 200,000. Nothing could be more inspiring than to see the womenfolk from every house in certain streets form processions to march to the ballot box and vote Labour, and nothing did more to make a Labour Government possible than the women's vote.

CHAPTER XVI

LABOUR ENTERS OFFICE

Results of 1922 Election—Labour becomes Official Opposition—Work in Parliament—Fall of Baldwin Government—Labour Enters Office—Cabinet Appointments—Foreign Policy—Reparations Agreement—Scheme to Stop War—Relations with Russia—Domestic Legislation—Labour Budget—Housing Act—Unemployment—Back in Opposition.

THE General Election of November 1922, at which the Labour Party gained 67 seats and returned 142 candidates to Parliament—thus becoming the second largest party in the House—marked a new stage in its history. Previously it had always been numerically weaker than either the Tory or the Liberal Party, and consequently its ambitions were temporarily limited to wielding a balance of power in the event of the Government of the day not having a complete majority of members.

With the relegation of the Liberal Party to the third place, however, Labour found itself called upon to provide the Official Opposition. True, in view of the huge majority of the Tory Party, there was no immediate prospect of a defeat which would carry with it an automatic reversion of office to the Labour Party. But this did not deter the Labour Members from entering upon their new responsibilities with the utmost seriousness. A meeting was held, and steps were taken to reorganise the Parliamentary party in the manner that was calculated to make it most effective in the House. Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald was elected Leader and Chairman, with Mr. J. R. Clynes as Deputy-Chairman, and Messrs. Stephen Walsh and J. C. Wedgwood, Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Arthur Henderson as Chief Whip, and Mr. Ben Spoor as acting Chief Whip.

From the beginning of the 1922 Session, the Labour Party entered with conspicuous vigour upon this new phase in its

career, and the thoroughness with which it acquitted itself enhanced its status considerably in the country, whilst at the same time the importance of the Liberal Party came to be less and less regarded. The session lasted only for three weeks, but the Labour spokesmen discovered opportunities for voicing their well-known views on the reorganisation of the mining industry, for criticising the Government's policy in Europe, and for denouncing its attitude towards mentally afflicted ex-service men, whilst the Irish Free State (Constitution) Bill was supported, in the hope that it might bring a spirit of goodwill and co-operation between the two countries.

On the reassembly of the House for the 1923 session, amendments to the King's Speech were tabled regretting that no mention was made of any effort to check the economic ruin to which Europe was drifting, or to render the League of Nations more representative of all peoples, whilst an inquiry was demanded into the unsympathetic administration of the Ministry of Pensions.

By the size of the Tory majority these amendments were all doomed to defeat, as also were a number of other proposals that were put forward by the party during the session. These included a protest against the action of the Home Secretary in deporting a number of Irish sympathisers, an appeal for an increase of the death duties and the reduction of the food taxes, a demand for a more liberal administration of the Unemployment Insurance scheme, and for the reduction of the amount of money spent on armaments, a Bill to grant pensions to mothers, a motion to deal more generously with the old age pensioners, and to establish a national minimum wage. At the same time, the determined opposition offered to the Army (Annual) Bill resulted in the abolition of Field Punishment No. 1—commonly known as crucifixion—whilst an undertaking was obtained that the Workmen's Compensation Act would be overhauled, and the reactionary Tory Bill for restricting the action of the Trade Boards Act was delayed.

The session came to an end in November, when Mr. Baldwin decided to appeal to the country for a mandate to enable him to introduce a system of Protection as a supposed remedy for unemployment. The General Election took place in December, and as a result Labour increased its representation from 142 to 191 seats. The Conservative strength was reduced to 258, whilst the Liberals had 158 and Independents 8 members in the House. As soon as the King's Speech was introduced,

the Labour Party moved a vote of No Confidence, and on this being carried by 328 votes to 256, Mr. Baldwin announced his resignation.

Thereupon the King sent for Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, and the first Labour Government in British history was born. There were some who thought, at the time, that the acceptance of office was a risky procedure. True, for a party to undertake the responsibility of forming a Government when it was open to defeat not only at the hands of a combination of the other parties, but through the opposition of one other party alone, was a very bold stroke indeed. Nevertheless, the country was looking to the Labour Party for a courageous lead, and the step was taken after full consideration of the situation by the executive of the Parliamentary Labour Party in conjunction with the Nation Executive of the party and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.

After leaving Buckingham Palace, the new Labour Premier allowed no time to be lost, for within twenty-four hours of his accepting office, most of the Labour Ministers were at work in their Departments of State. It was generally conceded that the Cabinet formed by Mr. MacDonald bore favourable comparison, both in experience of public work and intellectual capacity, with any of its predecessors, and the illusion that Labour had not sufficient talent with which to form a Ministry was exploded for once and for all. One unprecedented situation with which the movement found itself confronted was the necessity for safeguarding its interests in the House of Lords, and it became necessary to supplement the small group of members in that Chamber who already were sympathetically inclined towards the Labour programme by the creation of a number of new peers. Some of these, in accordance with Parliamentary usage, were included in the Cabinet, the full constitution of which was as follows :

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—Rt. Hon. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

Lord Privy Seal and Deputy-Leader of the House of Commons—
Rt. Hon. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.

Lord President of the Council—Rt. Hon. Lord PARMOOR,
K.C.V.O.

Lord Chancellor—Rt. Hon. Lord HALDANE, K.T., O.M.

Chancellor of the Exchequer—Rt. Hon. PHILIP SNOWDEN, M.P.

Secretary of State for Home Affairs—Rt. Hon. ARTHUR HENDERSON, M.P.

Secretary of State for the Colonies—Rt. Hon. J. H. THOMAS, M.P.

Secretary of State for War—Rt. Hon. STEPHEN WALSH, M.P.

Secretary of State for India—Rt. Hon. Lord OLIVIER, K.C.M.G., C.B.

Secretary of State for Air—Rt. Hon. Lord THOMSON.

First Lord of the Admiralty—Rt. Hon. Viscount CHELMSFORD, G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., C.G.I.E., G.B.E.

President of the Board of Trade—Rt. Hon. SIDNEY WEBB, M.P.

Minister of Health—Rt. Hon. JOHN WHEATLEY, M.P.

Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries—Rt. Hon. NOEL BUXTON, M.P.

Secretary for Scotland—Rt. Hon. WILLIAM ADAMSON, M.P.

President of the Board of Education—Rt. Hon. CHARLES PHILIPS TREVELYAN, M.P.

Minister of Labour—Rt. Hon. THOMAS SHAW, M.P.

Postmaster-General—Rt. Hon. VERNON HARTSHORN, M.P.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—Colonel Rt. Hon. JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M.P.

First Commissioner of Works—Rt. Hon. F. W. JOWETT, M.P.

The appointment of all the officials and several members of the Executive of the Parliamentary Party to Ministerial office necessitated a reorganisation of the party machine in the House, and in order that a systematic channel of communication between Ministers and members of the rank and file should be provided, a liaison committee was formed, consisting of three Ministers and twelve back-benchers. This enabled the Government to be in a position to consult a representative committee of the party at short notice, and made it possible for the party as a whole to make recommendations to the Government should such a course become necessary.

These preliminaries completed, the Government at once commenced, by administrative and legislative action, to translate its programme into effect so far as its numerical strength permitted. Both in the national and international spheres there were problems of immense proportions awaiting solution, and inasmuch as the revival of prosperity at home depended largely upon the resettlement of the chaotic conditions that prevailed in Europe, it soon became plain to see that Mr. MacDonald had acted wisely in

taking upon himself the double burden of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Never before had it been more essential that the representative of Great Britain in the councils of the nations should speak with all the weight of the First Minister of the Crown, for the whole world was looking eagerly and anxiously towards us for a lead in the direction of a real and lasting peace. It did not look in vain. The fairness and frankness of the Prime Minister's declarations at once brought a new spirit into international relations. The distrust and suspicion with which France had viewed Britain under the rule of the previous Government was soon dispelled. French democracy followed the example set in this country, and the hostility of the Poincaré-Curzon discussions was replaced by the Herriot-MacDonald bond of concord. Obstacles which hitherto had proved to be insuperable because of the angle from which they were approached, now became quite amenable to the reasonableness that marked the advent of the new regime.

The first step forward was represented by the London Agreement on the question of reparations. True, the Dawes Committee, the report of which body formed the basis for discussion at the conference, had been appointed during the tenure of the Poincaré and Baldwin Governments, but the recommendations would have been as valueless as the paper upon which they were written had not a statesman eager for a settlement of the long-drawn-out question been in charge of their ratification. The result was that, for the first time since the Armistice, the German reparation payments were placed on a definite footing. That nation was told exactly what was required of her. France and Belgium were persuaded to agree, too, that, as the British Labour Movement had pointed out for some time past, it was useless to expect any scheme of reparations to function so long as hostile troops remained in occupation of the Ruhr. Accordingly it was decided that these should be withdrawn within a year, in order that both Germany's goodwill and industrial productivity might be given a fair chance of fulfilling the demands made upon them.

The machinery of the scheme has found general approval amongst all classes and all parties. A loan of £40,000,000, subscribed by the Allies, has permitted the new German Bank of Issue to operate without any danger of a serious inflation in the currency. An International Commission is in control of the German State Railways, which thus will act as a form of security against the loan and the payments due. These

have been fixed at 1,000 million gold marks during the first financial year, with an increasing sum in subsequent years. A very significant feature of the arrangement was that the United States of America—largely through the persuasion exerted by Mr. MacDonald—has participated both in the raising of the loan and in the administration of the payments, thus forsaking the attitude of isolation which it adopted in previous negotiations.

Though the Labour Government was fully satisfied that the scheme was by far the best that had ever been propounded, it did not hesitate to bear in mind that there is one fundamental objection to any scheme of reparations—an objection that it had expressed on many occasions before it accepted office—namely, that the receipt of reparations payments may have a very harmful effect upon the industry and commerce of the receiving country. Accordingly it took care to satisfy itself that within the scheme provisions were made to arrange for the transfer of reparations payment under conditions that would allow for payments being stopped and Germany correspondingly relieved, if it were found that harm was being done either to the creditor countries or to Germany.

With its many advantages, therefore, and its main possible disadvantage, adequately safeguarded, the settlement represented the first real step that had been made towards the reconstruction of Europe. By far the greatest share of credit for its conclusion was due to Mr. MacDonald and M. Herriott. This has been generally and generously conceded by Mr. MacDonald's supporters and opponents alike. *The Daily News*, the Liberal newspaper, aptly summarised the opinion of the nation when it said "The settlement with France is a brilliant feather in his cap. To have succeeded where Bonar Law, Baldwin, and Lloyd George failed is a considerable achievement."

There is no doubt that in the absence of this restored Anglo-French friendship, no radical progress could have been made by the League of Nations in the pursuit of a policy of general disarmament. With the two nations working harmoniously, however, there was almost no limit to the good work that could be achieved. Mr. MacDonald was quick to realise this, and he therefore seized the opportunity of attending the 1924 Assembly of the League in person, instead of delegating the duty to minor Ministers, as had been the policy of his predecessors. Thus the status of the League was immeasurably

enhanced, and as the French Premier himself also attended, it was possible for the League to proceed with concrete proposals for disarmament.

Mr. MacDonald's memorable speech at Geneva, advocating the replacement of the arbitrament of arms by the arbitrament of reason, will go down to history as marking the turning-point in international relations. The whole world was waiting for the pronouncement that he made, and it led almost immediately to the abandonment of the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance that had been prepared—with its efforts to establish security through the medium of military alliances—and the substitution of a system of international arbitration, leading up to a policy of all-round disarmament. Nearly fifty nations appended their signatures to the Protocol embodying these proposals, and undertook, in the event of the ratification of their respective Governments being secured, to assemble six months later to consider definite proposals for the reduction of armaments.

The third big step taken by Mr. MacDonald for the pacification of Europe was his recognition of the Government of Russia. There is no more sincere opponent of the methods of the Soviet system than he—as his writings and speeches since the end of the War have proved—but he realised that a reunited Europe was an utter impossibility until the vast Russian republic was brought within the comity of nations.

It was on the question of Russia, however, that the Labour Government's downfall indirectly hinged. The obvious sequel to the restoration of diplomatic relations was the resuscitation of trade between the two countries, and a preliminary agreement for the development of this policy was entered into. Under its terms considerable concessions were made by the Soviet to British commercial interests, and guarantees of payment were made to certain of the British creditors whose holdings in Russia had suffered during the Revolution. As in the case of Germany, stability and reconstruction were only capable of achievement by the granting of a loan, and it was one of Mr. MacDonald's proposals that this should be subscribed by British investors and guaranteed by the Exchequer. Notwithstanding the plea, however, that adequate security would have been arranged, that at least two-thirds of the loan would have been spent in this country in the purchase of machinery and material for the re-establishment of Russian industry, and that the resultant shipments of Russian products would have helped to release the people of Britain from the

grip of the international trusts which at present monopolise the supplies of their food, the suggestion aroused vigorous opposition in several quarters, and it became apparent that the Government would be defeated if it attempted to continue its policy. As was only to be expected, having regard to the denunciations made by the Conservative Party during the election, Mr. Baldwin, when he formed his Government in November 1924, informed the Soviet Government that the Treaty would not be proceeded with farther.

If these three far-reaching developments in the international field had been the only accomplishments of the Labour Government during its brief nine months' term of office, they would have constituted a record fit to bear comparison with that of any preceding Government. But a programme of equal activity was pursued in regard to home affairs.

The first Bill introduced was one to alleviate the plight of the unemployed, by abolishing the restriction which imposed a periodical three weeks' gap during which contributors were debarred from receiving benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act. This was speedily passed through the House of Commons, as also was a second Bill to extend the payment of benefit from 26 weeks in the year to 41. A third Bill, though not accepted by Parliament in its entirety, conferred still further advantages on the unemployed, including the establishment of a statutory right to uncovenanted benefit, the increase of the benefit for adults by 3s. weekly, the doubling of the benefit for dependent children, the provision of benefit for 52 weeks in the year, and the extension of the scheme to persons thrown out of work by an industrial dispute at the establishment where they are employed, when they themselves were not parties to the dispute. The waiting period for the qualification to benefit was reduced from six to three days.

An endeavour was also made, under the Rent Acts, to prevent the eviction of an unemployed man from his dwelling until he had had the opportunity of applying to the Guardians for assistance with which to pay his arrears of rent, but this proposal was defeated by the combined opposition of the other two parties.

Another Rent Restrictions Act, which was introduced by a Labour Member, Mr. Ben Gardner, and adopted by the party, sought to extend the period of control until June 1928, to allow of the reduction of the permitted increases of rent from 40 per cent. to 25 per cent., and to repeal the provisions in the

previous Act whereby a house, on becoming vacant, ceased to be covered by the law. The second reading of the Bill was secured, but it was wrecked in Committee, where the Government were at a disadvantage in not having a majority of the members. A smaller Bill, however, was subsequently carried into law, modifying the circumstances under which a landlord could evict his tenant when he required the house for the occupation of a member of his own family, or of one of his employees.

The first Labour Budget naturally aroused a great deal of interest, accompanied by a certain amount of comment. The unanimous verdict, however, was that Mr. Snowden had proved himself to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer equal to any of his forerunners, and superior to the vast majority of them. Although he had only had a few months in which to formulate his proposals, he completely reversed the policy of the previous Government in many respects, and conferred benefits on all sections of the community. The boldest stroke lay in the drastic reductions which he effected in the food taxes, to the extent of nearly £24,000,000, thus greatly easing the burden which rising prices of food imposed on the working-class housewife. The Entertainment Tax and telephone rates were reduced, whilst the Inhabited House Duty was abolished, and the McKenna Duties that had been imposed, ten years previously, on imported motor-cars, watches, cinema films, and musical instruments. Mr. Snowden further intimated, in the course of his Budget statement, that it was the intention of the Government to produce a scheme for Mothers' Pensions at the earliest possible moment, and that the abolition of the thrift disqualification which penalised old age pensioners was already under consideration.

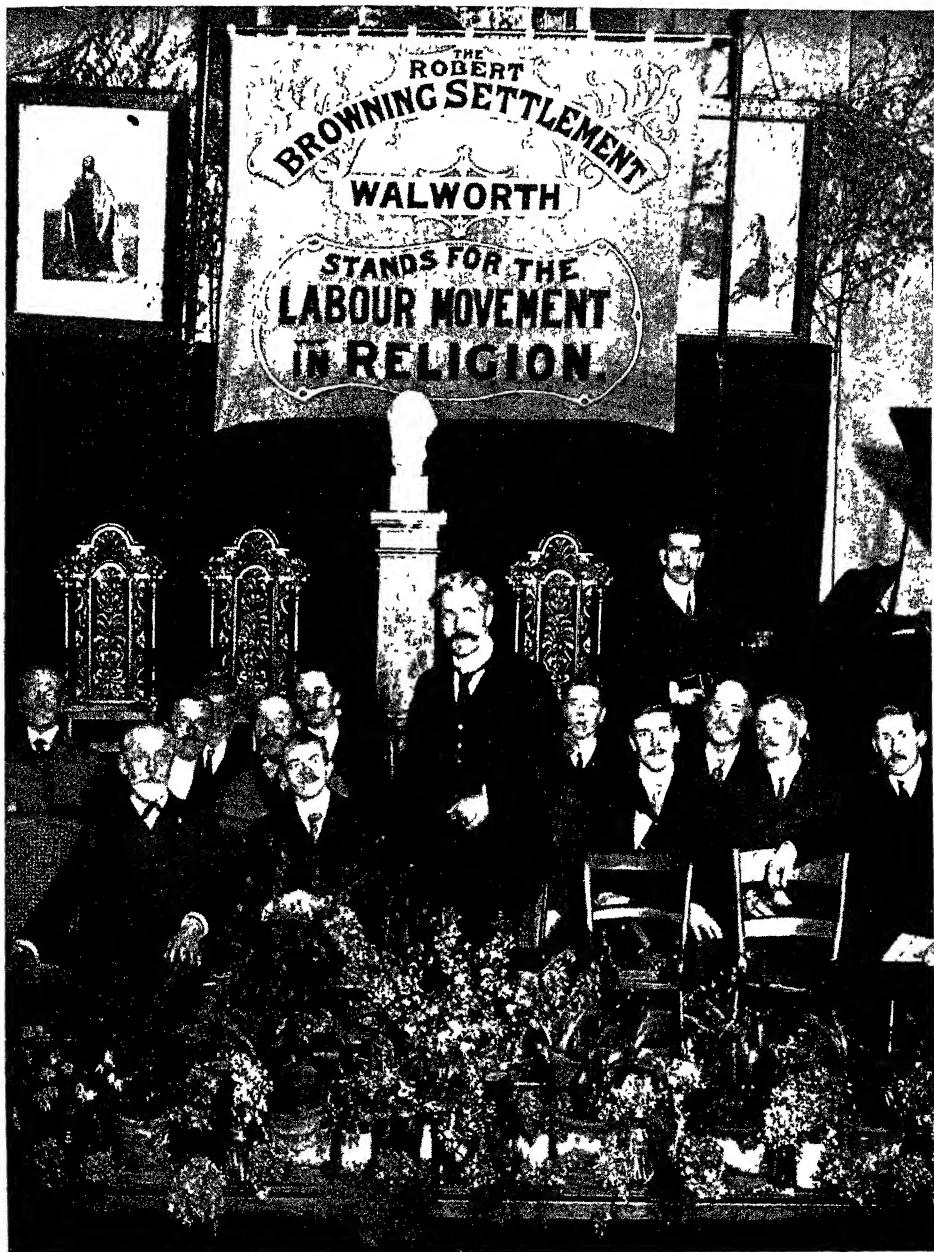
Later in the session the latter reform was placed on the Statute Book, conferring assistance upon tens of thousands of pensioners who hitherto had been deprived of their full rate of pension, and bringing hundreds of thousands of others on to the pay roll for the first time.

War pensioners, too, were more liberally dealt with than under previous Governments. Mr. F. O. Roberts, at the Pensions Ministry, substituted the human touch for the bureaucratic machine, and introduced the policy of giving the pensioner the benefit of the doubt in all cases. The pensions of aged parents and dependents of men who died on service were increased, and sick benefits were restored to the widows

and orphans. The seven years' limit for claims was abolished, and the stigma of pauperism was removed from ex-service mental patients. Moreover, new pensions were granted in deserving cases at the rate of over three hundred a week.

Undoubtedly the biggest piece of legislation that has been placed upon the Statute Book during recent years was Mr. Wheatley's Housing Act. Unlike the housing schemes formulated previously, its primary object was not to assist in the building of houses that were to be owned by their middle-class occupants, but to cater, on a large scale, for the masses of homeless people whose incomes precluded them absolutely from buying houses of their own. The rents, too, were fixed at a scale that brought them well within the reach of the people for whom they were intended. Nine shillings weekly was the average, the deficit to be made up by grants of £9 per house from the national exchequer, and £4 10s. from the local rates.

In framing his scheme, Mr. Wheatley proceeded on an entirely new line. He realised that in previous schemes no attention had been paid to the co-ordination of supply and demand, with the result that the building materials market was spasmodically taxed beyond the normal and the price of materials rose to an extent that the actual operations of building, so far as working-class dwellings were concerned, were seriously hampered. In the light of this experience, therefore, he gathered around him the representatives of the three interests that were most directly concerned—the master builders, the operative builders, and the manufacturers of building materials, and laid before them the general outline of his programme, which was for the construction of two and a half million houses, spread over fifteen years. This period was sufficiently lengthy to enable each group to augment its productive capacity to the extent necessary for building the houses, without being subjected to the fear—which would have arisen had not the fifteen years' continuity been guaranteed—that they themselves were likely to suffer by so doing. Accordingly, the master builders and manufacturers agreed to extend their plant, and the operatives to admit new workers into the industry by a scheme for the introduction of additional apprentices and the promotion of semi-skilled labourers. A National House Building Committee was set up to regulate these matters, and Local Authorities were asked to submit details of the number of houses that they required in order to overcome the



RELIGION AND LABOUR: BROWNING HALL MEETING IN LABOUR WEEK.
On the platform with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald are Mr. F. H. Stead, Mr. J. R. Clynes and other Labour Leaders.

shortage. Precautions for the prevention of profiteering were embodied in the Act by a clause which stipulated a periodical review of house-building costs, and under which the Minister could cut short his programme if at any time there were grounds for believing that the public were being exploited. Moreover, a supplementary Profiteering Bill was prepared, for introduction later in the session, which would have rendered unfair manipulation of the market almost an impossibility.

Unfortunately the Government was defeated before this latter Bill could be passed into law, and fears, too, are being entertained that the new Government may not administer the main Housing Act in the same enthusiastic spirit as its authors. This, however, is a matter that remains to be proved or falsified by the events, but it would be a grave pity if the hearty co-operation engendered amongst the various sections of the building industry were not to be turned to good account in the nation's interests.

There were many occasions on which the Government had cause to lament the fact that their good endeavours on behalf of large bodies of the people were rendered nugatory by the strength of the Opposition in the House. At times the task of upholding minority Government became well-nigh unbearable, but the Cabinet and their colleagues laboured on, willing to do their best, but recognising that they were not free agents in that connection. One of the most outstanding cases of this kind was when they attempted to pilot through the House their Agricultural Wages Bill. This, in its original form, would have been a most beneficent measure for the countryside, where the wages of the workers, in many cases, were still calculated on an eighteenth-century basis. Nevertheless, the combined forces of the opposing parties robbed the Bill of its most vital clause, that which gave power to a Central Authority to revise the rates fixed by County Committees if they were considered to be inadequate, and the Government had to be satisfied with securing the passage of the measure in its modified form. Consequently the machinery for safeguarding the agricultural worker is not so effective as it might have been, but at the same time it represents a distinct advance on hitherto prevailing conditions.

The predominant topic throughout the whole proceedings of the session was that of unemployment. It had taken a prominent part in the election, and it became the subject of almost daily discussion in the debates as well. That during

nine months of office, under circumstances that prevented it from putting the more radical points of its programme into operation, the Labour Government was able to reduce by over 100,000 the number of unemployed persons registering at the Employment Exchanges, to bring 10,000 men and women out of the workhouse, and to reduce the number receiving Poor Law out-relief by more than 200,000, demonstrated the seriousness with which it undertook the problem. Moreover, the fruits of its sensible policy in European affairs are still being gathered, and the time should not be far ahead when pre-War commercial relations with the Continent are recovered—a factor alone which will reduce the number of unemployed to its pre-war figure.

The Government did not content itself entirely, however, with the broad view that the restoration of normal trade relations would ultimately lead to the revival of normal employment. That was a necessary fundamental step to take, and one that had been neglected by former Governments, but in the meantime work had to be found for those who were waiting for the materialisation of the policy. Accordingly private firms were financed under the Trade Facilities Act, and large schemes of national productive work were sanctioned and embarked upon, including the construction of arterial roads, bridges, beet sugar factories, and drainage systems, whilst plans were prepared for a huge co-ordinated system of electricity supply, and the housing scheme alone, when fully in operation, was calculated to provide employment for two hundred thousand men.

Another question that was found to require attention when the Labour Party entered into office was the revision and modernisation of the Factory Acts. Practically no amendment of these laws had been made since the beginning of the century, and in many respects they were hopelessly out of line with modern industrial requirements. Before the Government had been six months in office, the Home Secretary, Mr. Arthur Henderson, had a comprehensive Bill ready for presentation to Parliament, which, in addition to codifying the existing legislation, proposed a general tightening-up of the regulations, and the introduction of additional safeguards for men, women, and juvenile workers. Clauses were included which rendered obligatory much greater protection of the workers against injury in dangerous trades, a forty-eight-hour week and appropriate rest intervals for women and juniors, improved

arrangements for lighting, heating, ventilation, and sanitation, and a more adequate system of inspection of factories by Home Office officials. That the proposals of the Bill called forth opposition from certain employers' organisations was perhaps the best possible testimony to the value of the benefits that they were calculated to confer upon the industrial workers. Another few months of Labour rule would have seen them translated into law.

Also with the object of improving industrial conditions, Bills were introduced to ratify the League of Nations Conventions on the questions of the forty-eight-hour week and the prevention of lead paint poisoning, whilst the Trade Boards System, for the protection of the workers against exploitation in those industries where a tendency towards sweating prevailed, was considerably extended. A significant feature of the industrial relations that obtained during Labour rule was the marked diminution in the number of serious strikes or lock-outs. The majority of those which did occur had their foundations laid during the tenure of office of the previous Government, and the number of working days lost from this cause, when compared with the average for the corresponding nine months of the preceding few years, shows a reduction that runs into tens of millions of days.

In Imperial affairs—despite the Conservative contention that the Empire could not hang together without the assistance of Imperial Preference—an excellent spirit was introduced by the Colonial Secretary (Mr. J. H. Thomas) and a period of greater contentment and co-operation between this country and the outposts of the Empire has rarely been known. No serious disturbances were recorded—that is a record in itself—and on the other hand the visit of Mr. Thomas to South Africa enhanced considerably the esteem in which this country was held, whilst the broad-minded manner in which the delicate Irish situation was handled received the approval of all three parties.

Whilst the estimates for the Defence Services were cut down by over £7,000,000, and the tax-payer thus relieved to this amount, the exigencies of the international situation were borne carefully in mind, and no action was taken which could be construed as rendering this country vulnerable to foreign attack. On the contrary, by discontinuing the previous Government's scheme for the construction of a new naval base at Singapore, the Labour Government did much to prevent the

growth of an anti-British spirit in the east, and a race in armaments that must inevitably have led to war had it been encouraged.

The prevailing policy on education was also revolutionised as it affected elementary, secondary, university, and adult education alike. Additional staffs and premises were sanctioned and provided, and a more liberal scale of scholarships was introduced.

From the same motive, the public-health services were freed from the restrictions that had previously been imposed on the grounds of economy, and Local Authorities were encouraged to do all in their power to further the cause of infant welfare and in the prevention and treatment of disease.

So far as the electoral system was concerned, an attempt was made from the Labour benches to secure the extension of the franchise to all women at the age of 21 years. Despite the opposition which came from some members of the Conservative Party, the second reading of the Bill was carried by 288 votes to 72, and the Government made such arrangements as would have secured its passage into law had the Administration been vouchsafed a few more months of life.

This, however, was not to be, for after the election of 29th October, 1924, the Conservatives were returned in such increased numbers that Mr. MacDonald and his Cabinet surrendered their seals of office. The time had come for them to return again to the Front Opposition Bench, but they left behind them a record of administrative and legislative effort that will bear comparison with that of any previous Government possessing every advantage of experience and power.

In the General Election the Labour Party returned to Parliament rather weaker, having lost 64 seats but gaining 22—a net loss of 42, which reduced its numbers in the House of Commons to 151. The aggregate vote in the country at large, however, showed a remarkable increase as compared with that registered to the previous General Election—a total of 5,551,549 as against 4,348,379 in 1923. As these closing paragraphs are written the Labour Party in Parliament has shown again its vigorous spirit by its work as the Official Opposition, and the organisation in the country is getting ready for the next election, at which it will make a bid not merely for office, but for power. The story, as it has been traced in this volume, is one of almost uninterrupted progress. Within a quarter of a century the Labour Party has become a vital force in the national life. It

has built on firm foundations an efficient electoral organisation and commands the loyalty and support of one-fourth of the electors of the country. A multitude of ardent, enthusiastic workers serve the party, and their voluntary efforts are its best asset in the political struggle. The history of the Labour Party is an epitome of democratic progress towards a New Social Order, the outlines of which begin to appear in the Party Programme framed by its leaders.

SECTION
ECONOMIC POLICY

CHAPTER XVII

PRINCIPLES OF INDUSTRIAL RECONSTRUCTION

By G. D. H. COLE, M.A.

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The Factory Worker—Revolutionary Ferment—Wage-Slavery—Capitalist Autocracy—Security and Equality—Their Meaning for the Workers—Industrial Control—Management and Ownership—Devolution of Responsibility—Profits or Public Service?—New Spirit in Industry—Organising Production.

THE period of accelerated economic change which is called the "Industrial Revolution" created, with the factory system, the modern working-class. The typical workman of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries passed his time in a small workshop belonging to his employer, or in his own home as a semi-independent producer under the domestic system. The new machines, and the application of water and then of steam power, by making large-scale production pay better than handwork, forced the people into the factories, round which sprang up the hideous new factory towns. The labour for these factories was not mainly that of the old hand-workers ; the new employers recruited their hands among the peasants driven from the land by the enclosures, and above all from the women and children, who could most easily be made to work long hours for low wages and under the wretched conditions of the new factory discipline. For the time the working-class standard of life was radically lowered, though it rose again slowly as the nineteenth century advanced, and some small share in the enormously increased productive capacity of industry was necessarily passed on to those whose hands called the new wealth into being.

The working-class movement, as an expression of the discontent of the toilers and their aspiration towards a different social order, took its rise in the period of the Industrial Revolution and of the counter-revolutionary war waged by Great Britain and her allies against France. The French Revolution, and the great stirring of ideas which went with it, exerted a profound influence on working-class thought. Revolt against the new economic conditions and faith in the gospel of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," were together the great formative forces in the making of a working-class Radical Movement. Politically, this movement expressed itself first in the Reform agitation, and then, after 1832, in the political demands of Chartism. The Reform Act of 1832 had left the workers unrepresented, deserted by their middle-class allies in the struggle for reform. They formulated in Chartist their own political programme; but the urban worker had to wait for political enfranchisement till 1867, long after the revolutionary ferment had died down.

For it did die down. In the earlier decades of the capitalist industrial system the workers revolted against it as a new thing, a horror of unaccustomed toil in noisome surroundings which made an evil contrast with the fields and villages from which they had come. They hated industrialism, as the peasant in India or Russia to-day often hates the ceaseless whirring of the wheels. But in time, Capitalism learnt that the ferocious tyranny of the early days did not pay, and that rather higher wages, rather less hours, and rather better conditions, even if they were yielded at first only in response to urgent Trade-Union demands or legislative pressure, were actually productive of higher and more certain profits. At the same time there were growing up new generations of workers, born into the factory system, and accepting its monotonous routine and severe discipline, as well as the evil conditions of the factory towns, as the common lot of their class. After 1848 conditions were slowly improving on the whole, and the mood of the workers was to make the best of a bad job, and to concentrate on securing what improvements they could within the four corners of the capitalist system. This mood lasted till the late seventies or early eighties of the last century, when the modern Socialist Movement began to develop, and Trade Unionism, under its influence, took on a new and more aggressive form. The workers were becoming educated, and growing conscious that they were nearing the

limits within which they could improve their lot without an attack on the capitalist system itself. The Socialists, learning from Marx on the one hand, and from the English leaders of a century ago, such as Robert Owen, on the other, began to frame plans for an alternative organisation of industry, based on co-operation instead of capitalist exploitation, and on production for use instead of for profit. Education, moreover, made them more acutely conscious of their inferior status in industry, and of their exclusion from all voice in economic policy, however deeply it might affect their well-being. Socialism captured the Trade Unions, and directed them both to the formation of an independent political party and to the formulation of a new industrial policy. The workers began to think of the Capitalist system as a system of wage-slavery.

Well-meaning people sometimes grow indignant when they hear the present conditions of the workers in this and other industrial countries described as "wage-slavery." "Nonsense!" they exclaim. "Has not the worker nowadays full personal freedom? Is he not free to use his leisure hours as pleases him best? Is he tied to his employer, or can he not leave him at short notice and seek work elsewhere? Does not a whole mass of industrial legislation exist to protect him against excessive hours, unhealthy factory conditions, and even, in many trades, sweated rates of wages? Has he not Trade Unions to look after his interests, and are not these Unions recognised both by the State and by the employer? Do they not impose reasonable working rules and enforce standard rates of wages throughout the principal industries? And finally, is not the worker a citizen, with political rights equal to those of his employer in controlling the machinery of State, and thus prescribing the fundamental conditions under which industry is organised?"

Some of these things are largely true in every Capitalist country, and most of them are largely true in Great Britain. What, then, becomes of the assertion that the worker is a "wage-slave"? Surely he is a free contracting party, with clear rights as far removed from the chattel-slave as London is from Tokio?

And yet—there is substance in the description of the industrial worker under these conditions as a "wage-slave," and the objections raised for the most part miss the point. There were, as the opponents of abolitionism used trium-

phantly to explain, many chattel-slaves who were quite comfortably off in a material sense ; but they were not the less chattel-slaves for being well treated by their masters. The modern wage-worker may protect himself fairly effectively through his Trade Union or be protected fairly well by the Trade Boards Acts, Factory Acts, Workmen's Compensation Acts, and other examples of modern industrial legislation. But let us not be in too great haste to conclude that this makes the description of "wage-slave" inapplicable to his status.

"But surely," our objector retorts, "there is also this fundamental difference. Not only is the modern wage-worker protected at his work by Trade Unionism and benevolent legislation ; he is above all contrasted with the chattel-slave as a free man with independent rights of his own. The chattel-slave had no rights ; though custom might protect him, he was legally at his master's mercy."

True enough. Those who use the term "wage-slave" do not mean to equate wage-slavery with chattel-slavery, or to suggest that the condition of chattel-slave and wage-slave is the same. They admit that the wage-system is a great advance on both chattel-slavery and such intermediate forms as serfdom and peonage. They recognise the huge importance of the worker's accession to at least a nominal equality of political rights. They recognise that he holds in his hands two sharp instruments of deliverance—political and industrial action. But they say that he has not yet used these instruments to full purpose. They persist in defining him as a wage-slave. Why ?

Because, in their view, one at least of the essential marks of slavery is still upon him. Politically, he is up to a point his own master in that he can set in authority a Government of his own choosing, responsible to himself and to his fellow-workers. But economically he has no equivalent rights. He works under a master, and under managers and supervision, who are not of his choosing, and are in no way responsible to him or to his fellow-workers. He can, indeed, leave his employer on giving due notice ; but since he must live by working and can get work only if someone will employ him, he can only change over to another employer, under whom he will have to work on the same conditions.

The worker is not only subjected to a discipline to which he does not regard himself as a consenting party : he also

sells to his employer the right to use his labour at his own discretion. It is no business of the worker's what he makes, or for whom ; whether the thing he makes is useful, useless, or positively harmful ; at what price it is sold, or what relation that price bears to his own wage. He is not supposed to concern himself with the "policy of industry" ; that is the affair of his industrial betters. Once he enters the factory, he is only so much labour power, possessed of skill in greater or less degree and therefore of value. He surrenders in return for his wage all control over the use of his labour beyond the few conditions laid down by his Union in the wage-bargain.

All this is true, even on the assumption that the worker has found a master willing to employ him and can find another if he becomes dissatisfied with his situation. But this is by no means always the case. Often there are many workers unemployed, and long periods of waiting for a job with only the meagre income provided by the State for those who are out of work. Under such conditions the worker's nominal choice of employer becomes a mockery. He dare not leave his job for fear of not finding another. He may forfeit unemployment pay if he leaves for a reason deemed inadequate by the administering officials. And he will be compelled by these officials, if he is drawing unemployment benefit, to accept the first job that comes along on penalty of losing even that meagre source of income. Even when he is in a relatively good job, the fear of unemployment constantly haunts him, and, save at times of exceptional trade boom, largely nullifies his theoretical right to stand up for his claims like a man. In this and many other respects the real status of the worker is very different from his theoretical status under the British Constitution. He is, and feels himself to be, constantly in the position of an inferior.

The worker's rights as a consumer depend, as we have seen, on his ability to find employment and earn money as a producer. If he falls out of work, he loses the greater part of his consuming power and holds what is left to him only on the precarious tenure of a State "dole." His very rights of citizenship are threatened by any prolonged spell of unemployment, for he may be forced to appeal to the Poor Law, and so lose some of his most vital civic rights. The chattel-slave had no rights ; but he had by custom a large measure of security. The wage-worker has many rights ; but their

tenure is insecure because his own position as a worker is permanently insecure.

This sense of insecurity and inferiority in the economic system is among the things that make men's faith in the Labour Movement a religion. For the Labour Movement sets ~~out to achieve for all men in the community as much security as can be achieved in human affairs and as much equality as is compatible with individual differences.~~ It stands for security and equality of rights for all—and it seeks to apply these principles not only to politics, but to the economic foundations of industrial society.

My concern here is with the industrial implications of these twin principles of security and equality. They are the basis of Labour's industrial policy. They give meaning to the programmes and claims alike of the Trade Unions and of the Labour Party in the industrial field. They find an outlet in the demand, now expressed by all sections of the Labour Movement, for democratic self-government in industry, or, as it is often called, "workers' control."

Workers' control is not, indeed, a clear-cut and definite schedule of demands, which can be set down in black and white and applied without change to any set of conditions or to any industry. It is an idea, and an ideal, rather than a programme; but it is an idea which becomes embodied in many programmes. Briefly, it is the idea that, as we have reorganised, and are still in process of reorganising, our political system on democratic lines, so ought we to undertake a corresponding reorganisation of industrialism on the same basis of principle.

"Ah!" you say, "but what, after all, is democracy? Is it merely a system of voting and elections and representative Government such as we have now in politics and appear to find not wholly satisfying?" These things are, indeed, the imperfect expressions in our present political system of the democratic spirit. They are not democracy; but we cannot have democracy without these, or some improved ways of election and representation developed out of them. They are, in this sense, essential to democracy; but democracy itself is not embodied in them, save in a very partial sense. It is behind them, inspiring them, and inspiring us to find better means for its political expression. They are its political mechanism—the poor best we have so far been able to devise. But it does not follow that, when we strive at length to apply

the democratic principle to industry, we must imitate all the forms we have adopted for its political expression. Industry will have to throw up its own democratic forms ; and we must find the forms most appropriate to it, and ensure their adoption.

This is the answer to those who, professing to accept democracy in politics, deny that it is suitable for the task of industrial control. Politics, they say, can be democratised, because it is everybody's business ; but industry cannot, because it is a technical affair, concerned not with the government of men and women, but with the production of goods. Yet who can deny that, in order to produce goods, industry must first govern men, or that, for once the ordinary worker is conscious of the pressure upon him of the laws of the State, he is conscious a hundred times of the laws imposed on him by the industrial system and the factory in which he works ? The distinction between the "government of men" and the "production of goods" is fundamentally false. The industrial system is only a form of human government which the community has in modern times so far failed to bring under collective control.

The distinction between politics and industry is, however, important. It is important, not because the one is a sphere suited to democracy and the other not, but because democracy must take different forms to meet different problems. We shall not achieve industrial democracy by merely setting up an Industrial Parliament on the analogy of the political Parliament ; we have to think out as a separate and highly complex problem of government the best ways of applying democracy in the industrial sphere.

This is what the organised Labour Movement, especially in recent years, has been setting itself seriously to do. The workers want to get rid of the sense of insecurity and inferiority which now besets them all through their industrial lives. They try to shape their desire for security and equality into industrial, as well as political, programmes and demands. And they express the general striving, in all its various forms, by the name of "workers' control."

Industry, from the worker's point of view, is to-day an irresponsible affair. He works for an employer, who is either an individual or, far more often, an impersonal company or syndicate represented by a number of salaried directors and managers. If the employer is an individual, he is there, not

because anyone chose him for the job, but either because he inherited the right to be an employer, or enough money to make himself an employer, or because he has somehow accumulated enough money to become an employer. He may have raised himself by thrift or enterprise; or he may owe his position to sheer luck or even to clearly anti-social qualities. He may be a good employer or a bad employer—a capable employer or an incapable employer. There are some of all sorts. The point is that, from the workman's outlook, he is irresponsible and self-elected as leader and master, with no right to his position that the workman is morally obliged to recognise. If he does his work well, his workers may get along with him on friendly enough terms. But his being good is an accident; and good personal relations in particular cases do not establish any general right.

Far more often, we have said, the employer is an impersonal firm, working through salaried heads and Sub-heads. In this case the representatives with whom the workman comes into contact are themselves in a sense employees, though they may often have also a direct financial interest in the business. But who appoints these managers to exercise their authority over the workers? Nominally, the whole body of the shareholders appoints the directors, the directors the head managers, the head managers the under-managers. Actually the control of most shareholders and many directors is purely nominal, and the business is finally controlled by quite a few persons who are either the head managers or have a very large financial interest. Leave aside for the moment the salaried managers, who are appointed and can be dismissed by the holders of the financial power. To whom or what do these holders of financial power owe their authority, their right to govern the whole body of employees working for the firm? Clearly to the invested capital which they represent. Their right is a money right—they represent the claim of invested capital to the supreme government of industrial concerns. And, as representing invested capital, which is hungry for dividends, they must govern industry so as to produce for the principal shareholders the maximum profit.

“But why,” ask the workers, “should invested capital claim this absolute right over us? Is not the wealth created in the business created by us, even if it is created with the machines that capital has bought? Are not the very machines and the materials with which we feed them products of



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labour? Why should not we, who work with hand and brain in producing goods, control this great mechanism of production? Surely our claim is at least as good as the claim of those who only lend their money? We hold that it is far better."

And if you answer that the investor who lends his capital risks the loss of it, should the enterprise fail, or the goods fetch a price below their cost of production, the workers will not be at a loss for a reply. "And do we risk nothing?" they will ask. "Are we not being daily maimed and killed by these machines, or crushed beneath falls of earth in the mines? Are we not subject to the innumerable casualties of industrial life? And have we not always before us the terrible risk of unemployment, of finding no one who will employ us for his profit, of losing our right to income, of watching our families pinch and starve, and feeling our own skill deteriorate while we stand by in hope of a job that does not come? We can tell the investor, with his reserve funds to keep up dividends even in bad years of slump, a thing or two about the risks of industry."

The worker's claim, then, is in essence that the service which he gives in production entitles him, not merely to a fair wage for a reasonable working day, but to a share in the control of industry. Production, he says in effect, is a democratic and essentially co-operative business. Each thing that we use is the work of many hands co-operating in a common service. It needs the labour of manual workers, technicians, administrators, to bring it to completion. Why should not all these, by virtue of their service, share in the control of the mechanism by which it is produced? Our lives and happiness depend on how the mechanism is controlled; surely it is our right to have a voice in deciding how the mechanism is to be used.

And if, abandoning the exclusive claim on behalf of the investor, you answer that production is a technical affair which must be controlled by technical men who understand its intricate workings, the answer is that politics also is a technical affair, and that no one asks that the ordinary voter should take into his own hands the actual administration of all the complicated affairs of State. What he asks is the right to control policy and to play his part in execution only in the measure of his capacity. Similarly, in industry, what the workers want is not that every man shall be manager, but

that management shall be so constituted and controlled as to ensure the conduct of industry in the common interests of the mass of the people, who are at once producers and consumers, and not of the small minority whose primary concern is not with production, but with the rate of profit on invested capital.

This ideal involves not only a changed attitude and responsibility on the part of the head managers at the top, but also a far wider distribution of power and responsibility among the workers. One of the chief charges of Labour against the present industrial system is that it is wasteful and inefficient. Not only does it fail to utilise fully the available resources by leaving many willing workers unemployed or under-employed. It also fails to give to those who are employed sound reasons and inducements to do their best. The ordinary workers feel, and can feel, to-day no personal or collective responsibility for the successful conduct of industry. Rigidly excluded from responsibility and control of policy, they inevitably think of the management as a hostile power. They do not, and cannot be expected to, put out their best effort to make the factory in which they work a success, or to produce the highest quality and quantity of output. But it is clear that the efficiency of production could be immensely increased if every grade from top to bottom felt itself personally responsible for the success of the enterprise, and knew that the work was being directed in the common interest of all, and not for the profit of a favoured few. Employers now try to stimulate this feeling by offering bonuses and similar financial incentives. They fail, because they fail to understand the men whom they employ, or the fundamental wrongness of the system which they operate. Men will give of their best, not in return for financial incentives alone, but only if they are satisfied that the policy of the concern for which they work is sound and communal, and if each man feels that success or failure depends in some measure on his own personal initiative, and that he is on his honour to do his best, and use his discretion within the limits of his own job, in the common interest of all.

An efficient democratic system of industrial control must therefore not only secure a right direction of policy at the top—which is the object of communal ownership and control of industry—but also provide for a general devolution of power and responsibility through every grade of the service.

This was the object of the scheme submitted by the Miners' Federation to the Coal Commission, and recently¹ rejected by the combined votes of Liberals and Conservatives in the House of Commons. The Labour Party and the Miners' Federation wanted, not only to secure public ownership of the collieries, but also to set up a system of administration, through National, District, and Pit Councils, representative of all the manual and technical grades. The purpose of the scheme was to give to every technician and to every miner the sense that the community was entrusting to him, as a responsible charge, the whole detailed conduct of the mining industry, and that it was his duty as a good citizen to respond with the best work of hand and brain. The similar plans thought out by workers in many other industries have the same object, though the methods proposed necessarily differ from case to case according to the nature of the industry. Sometimes national ownership is the basis of the scheme, sometimes municipal or consumers' co-operative ownership; sometimes the workers set out to operate directly through a Guild formed by themselves under Trade-Union auspices for the work of production. There are Guilds already in the building, engineering, tailoring, furnishing, and other industries in which public ownership is, at least, not an immediate possibility. On the other hand, in other great services like mines and railways and electrical supply, workers' control can be secured only on a firm basis of public ownership.

Whatever the method may be, the object is plain enough. There can be no reconciliation between workers' control and the conduct of industry for private profit. The workers claim, not a share in profits, but the abolition of profit and the reorganisation of industry on a basis of public service—production for use, not profit. They want social ownership and workers' control, not in order to make profit for themselves, but in order that industry may be run without profit in the interests of all and with full efficiency based on continuous production. They want a share in control, not in order to condone slackness, but in order to give of their responsible best in the public service.

This new system of industry, not to be achieved in a moment or without a difficult transition from the present anti-social and inefficient methods, will not, of course, reduce the

¹ The Bill for nationalising the mines and minerals was rejected by 264 votes to 68, on second reading in the House of Commons on 16th May, 1924.

need for skilled management, or for giving skilled managers a wide authority in the carrying out of their functions. It will even increase the need, and at the same time provide the means of meeting it. It should appeal to the manager fully as much as to the manual worker. For at present the good manager works under heavy disadvantages. Though he may work for a salary, his task is not to give the best service he can to the workers and the community, but to satisfy the purely financial demands of the shareholders. If it pays best to produce little in order to keep prices high, he must do this, and discharge workers and reduce the purchasing power of the public. His proposals for making the factory more efficient in production, or for lightening the workers' labour, are regarded by his directors purely from the standpoint of their effect on dividends and share-values. Moreover, since the manager is, and must act as, the servant of the capitalist, the workers naturally distrust him, and usually refuse him their full co-operation. He cannot establish with them that relationship of friendly team work in the common task which is the real key to efficiency. Even when he suggests what is reasonable, he is often regarded with natural suspicion. When he gives orders, they are obeyed, not in the spirit of men working for a chosen leader, but often grumbly and unwillingly. He is compelled to drive, where he can succeed only by leading.

Social ownership and workers' control will release a new spirit in industry—a spirit of willing service and friendly co-operation among all grades of workers by hand and brain. It will not bring perfection—no system will—nor can it be expected to work with perfect smoothness on the immediate morrow of the change. The workers have grown used to thinking of the “boss” as an enemy, and of the managerial grades as the representatives of the “boss.” It will take time for them to unlearn the lesson taught them by generations of evil capitalist exploitation. But they will learn quickly; for men respond readily to a change in moral atmosphere, and their generous impulses of service, as Robert Owen knew well a century ago, ripen swiftly in a congenial atmosphere. The new atmosphere of industry will be unlike the old most of all in this—that, instead of appealing to the baser passions, it will make its appeal to what is best in every man or woman.

To-day, the worker is induced to work mainly by appeals

either to his greed or to his fears. He is coaxed by bonuses and piece-work payments, which are often filched back from him later by price-cutting when he has increased his production; and he is driven by the fear of unemployment or disciplinary measures. It is a commonplace that wage-labour is more efficient than slave-labour. Labour under workers' control will be far more efficient than either. It is time to put the world's work on a higher moral plane, and to abandon the barbaric notion that the ordinary man must, or can, be coerced or coaxed into giving of his best. We must appeal to him as a man and a citizen, and so order our industrial system that he can be sure that his work will go to realise the common good.

In industries under workers' control there will be no employers. Indeed, as we have seen, the employer is in most industries already obsolete. Large-scale capitalism has replaced him by the salaried manager. Workers' control will leave the salaried manager in due authority, only destroying the class preference which now mainly governs the selection of men for managerial posts. It will open management to the most efficient, stressing not only the technical qualifications that are required, but also the vital capacity for real leadership of men. It will sweep away the devices by which capitalism now seeks to bind the managers firmly to itself—the class exclusiveness, the giving to the manager of a financial interest in the business in order that he may take the investor's attitude to industry. It will make the manager, equally with the clerk or the manual worker, a salaried servant, treating his service as a responsible profession and not as a means of exploitation. We have already, in State and municipal management, outstanding examples of fine and disinterested service. Workers' control will enable these men, and others like them, to do far better work by establishing a really co-operative relationship with their fellow-workers in the common service.

Trade-Union policy, for many years past, has been growingly animated by these ideals. The Trade Unions work to-day under grave disadvantages. They and their members have no recognised authority and status in industry, though they have great and increasing unrecognised power. Excluded from any recognised share in control, they have necessarily confined themselves to a negative function. They tell the employer, through working rules and regulations backed by

the right to strike, what he must not do. Most of these rules and regulations are reasonable and necessary to protect the workers against exploitation ; but the whole position is unsatisfactory. Industry cannot be efficient while the real power in it is divided between two hostile groups—one nominally vested with full authority to give all orders and run the system at its own will, the other with a large unrecognised power to impose limitations and restrictions, but no power at all to give positive orders. It is not the fault of the Trade Unions that they are in this position : it is a direct result of Capitalism. It is quite useless to complain of Trade-Union "restrictions" ; for the Trade Unions must either impose them, or permit their members to be exploited without check. It is absurd to say that the Unions ought to "co-operate" with the employers ; for the whole system is based on a denial of their right to co-operate. As soon as any Union attempts any form of positive interference in the conduct of industry, the employers raise a unanimous shout about "managerial functions,"¹ and accuse the Union of overstepping the limits proper for inferior people such as mere hired labourers. The remedy is to give the Trade Unions and their members a recognised status in industry, and to remove the need for "restrictions" by according to them positive functions in the ordering of the productive system. Much of the supervision which now swells the overhead costs of production would be wholly unnecessary under a reasonable system of public ownership and workers' control. The workers in the workshops would be left free to arrange the detailed working of production, to choose leaders of their own, to act as a team and so relieve the higher management, which would itself be their representative, of the expensive tasks of detailed supervision and control. At each stage from the workshop to the national controlling authority, the voice of the workers would be heard, and the aim would be, not to concentrate power and responsibility in as few hands as possible, but to diffuse it widely through the whole body of the industry. The workers' organisation would cease to be mainly restrictive, and would take on the task of helping to organise production in the most efficient and least laborious way. Instead of perpetual conflict between rival groups, we should have at last a united effort to make production a triumphant success from the standpoint of Society as a whole.

¹ In the national engineering lock-out of 1922, for example.

But all this assumes a fundamental change of ownership and control. Capitalism means production for profit, and the new spirit of service simply cannot be called into play as long as Capitalism is in authority. There must be social ownership, at least of all industries carried on under large-scale capitalist conditions. This does not mean that all industries must be nationalised, or, as we have seen, that any industry should be bureaucratically controlled. In each there must be the appropriate devolution of responsibility through one form or another of workers' control. And, whereas certain great national industries, such as mines, railways, the mercantile marine, shipbuilding, iron and steel production, must be acquired by the community as a whole, there are many others, such as the local public utility services, for which local or regional public ownership is the more appropriate system, and yet others, such as retail distribution, that could be best taken over completely by the consumers' Co-operative Movement. In others, such as building and tailoring, I for my part believe that the best system will be for the workers, with credits and financial aid from the public, to take these over through productive Guilds constituted by the Trade Unions on a basis of production for service, without any form of private profit. There is need for the greatest flexibility and variety, both in the forms of social ownership and in the methods of control and administration. Labour has no desire to force all industries into a cast-iron system. It wants to abolish the anti-social system of private capitalism, and to bind together all grades of workers by hand and brain into a common fellowship of service. But, within these conditions, it is keen to leave the widest freedom for diverse methods and experiments. We know a better way than capitalism—the way of workers' control and self-governing service. But we shall only find out by experiment the best ways of applying our principle to all the special cases with which we have to deal. Within the principle of "production for use instead of profit" Labour's policy is one of adventurous pioneering based on a profound belief that men and women will respond nobly to a fine appeal, as soon as the conditions are so adjusted as to enable that appeal to be fairly made.